

Crown Prince to head delegation to OIC summit

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan will lead Jordan's delegation to the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) summit due in Tehran between Dec. 9 and 11, Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi announced Tuesday. Speaking to reporters after a regular Cabinet session, Dr. Mutawi said that the Jordanian delegation will include Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, President of the Senate Zeid Rifai as well as the ministers of foreign affairs, industry and trade and supply, Awqaf and Islamic affairs. He said that Foreign Minister Fayez Tarawneh will leave for Tehran on Friday to participate in a preparation meeting by Islamic foreign ministers of participating countries.

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Majali says final status negotiations should 'deal with all of Jerusalem'

AMMAN (J.T.) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali stressed that the final status negotiations should "deal with all of Jerusalem, not just the eastern sector" occupied by Israel in 1967, agencies reported yesterday.

Reiterating Jordan's support to the Palestinians, Dr. Majali, who held a few-hour talks with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat in the West Bank city of Ramallah yesterday, also said Israel's hard-line policies are a major obstacle to the peace process.

The prime minister, was quoted by a news agency as calling on Israel to stop its intransigence in the peace process.

"I carry a message from His Majesty King Hussein about the action Jordan has taken on all occasions to support the Palestinians and their leader Yasser Arafat," Agency France Presse (AFP) quoted Dr. Majali as saying.

"Mr. Arafat has made it clear to us that Israeli intransigence is the main barrier in the peace process. All barriers must be removed so the peace process can move forward," he reportedly said.

The Prime Minister also said Jordan supported the

Palestinians' rejection of a recent Israeli cabinet decision to implement only a limited one-phase redeployment from 6-8 per cent of the West Bank.

Already signed Palestinian-Israeli interim agreements stipulate that Israeli redeployment from 90 per cent of the West Bank must be implemented in a three-phase withdrawal to be concluded by mid-1998.

In a joint press conference yesterday, Mr. Arafat and Dr. Majali ruled out that the third phase of Israeli redeployment could be discussed before the first and second phases are implemented.

Mr. Arafat told reporters that the Israeli proposal has not yet been officially submitted to the Palestinians and that they have learned of such plan only through the media.

Chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erakat was quoted by AFP as saying that Dr. Majali had assured Mr. Arafat of Jordan's support for the Palestinian demand that there "must be three stages of redeployments as outlined" in interim peace accords.

"We cannot accept the cancellation of the third stage," he said.



Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat at an official welcoming ceremony in Dr. Majali's honour Tuesday. Following their meeting, President Arafat raised the volume in a war of words with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu insisting 'the state of Palestine exists' (Reuters photo)

Jordanians and Palestinians are scheduled to hold a meeting on Dec. 17 to boost cooperation in the field of trade and border-related issues, Dr. Majali also announced.

The Jordanian delegation to

the talks will be headed by Deputy Prime Minister Jawad Anani, the prime minister added.

Dr. Majali and Mr. Arafat also reviewed EU and U.S. positions and said both pow-

ers have expressed support for the Palestinians' stands.

Dr. Majali was accompanied by Dr. Anani, Foreign Minister Fayez Tarawneh, and Health Minister Ashraf Kurdi.

Majali expected to reshuffle Cabinet after securing vote of confidence

By Francesca Ciriaci
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali is widely expected to reshuffle his Cabinet in the coming weeks after his government wins a vote of confidence from the newly-elected Parliament, officials and analysts said on Tuesday.

The Lower House will start debating the policies of Dr. Majali's government in the second half of December before endorsing the Council of Ministers, they added.

Over 55 deputies in the 80-seat Chamber, dominated by tribal leaders, centrists and pro-establishment figures, are expected to vote in favour of the government, they said. Others, including the 16 opposition deputies — Islamists, Pan-Arabists, leftists and independents are likely to vote against it.

The 24-member Cabinet, formed in March while Parliament was in recess, will use His Majesty King Hussein's Speech from the Throne as the policy platform on which it will seek deputies' confidence, according to Art. 54 of the Constitution.

"The government expects the debate to start sometime in the second half of this month," one official told the Jordan Times. "After it gains the confidence vote, and having any last minute surprises, Dr. Majali is expected to introduce a reshuffle to the cabinet and carry on," he said.

"Continuity in policies is needed," added the official who requested anonymity. He gave no further details.

Several politicians said they expected Dr. Majali to include

up to 12 new ministers, some of them lawmakers, in the much-expected reshuffle.

"The current government was mainly concerned with preparing for and supervising the elections," said one politician.

"Now it will have to carry out programmes and put order to our House through realising some of the goals set out in His Majesty's Speech from the Throne (delivered on Saturday)."

In his address inaugurating the first parliamentary session since the November 4 elections dogged by an Islamist-led boycott, King Hussein promised new legislations to regulate all aspects of political life in Jordan — a key demand by the opposition.

He said the government will introduce main laws regulating future elections, professional associations and political parties — to help modernise Jordan's political drive. But he gave no details.

The current one-person, one vote electoral system was highly criticised by the opposition as promoting sectarianism and tribalism but the government went ahead and used it in last month's ballot.

Several deputies and politicians fear the introduction of tighter rules to make the 12 professional associations less political.

The unions, many of them dominated by Islamists, have been the most prominent critics of Jordan's 1994 peace treaty with Israel. Without a significant parliamentary opposition, they are expected to become an even greater focus for dissent, politicians say.

His Majesty King Hussein

also did not say whether the temporary Press and Publications Law, issued in May, would be submitted to Parliament during its current ordinary session, which ends in early March.

The Islamist-led opposition boycotted the elections in protest at what its said was the steady erosion of parliamentary authority, culminating in tough amendments to the Press and Publications Law.

The legislation, which was criticised by international rights groups who said it put freedom of expression under siege, has caused the suspension of a dozen weekly newspapers.

Deputies and politicians remained divided on whether deputies should be included in future governments on grounds they might seek to serve the interests of their tribes and constituencies at the expense of dedicating their tenure to serve national interest.

But they said the trend of including lawmakers in governments was likely to continue in the absence of any single large political party in the Lower House and because the King has so far been non-committal to a separation between parliamentary and ministerial mandates.

Raed Bakri (Amman 3rd District) said he was in favour of a reshuffle resulting in deputies joining the Cabinet. "To bring fresh blood and energies" into the government.

Fawzi Tu'eimeh (Balqa) said he was against the double mandate, and maintained deputies should be given a portfolio only if they have experience and knowledge in that specific field.

Arafat says Palestinian state exists; Netanyahu threatens to annex land

Israel must 'soberly' accept the establishment of a Palestinian state — Sharon

Combined Agencies
Dispatches

DEFYING THREATS by Israel to annex parts of the West Bank if he declared a Palestinian state, President Yasser Arafat insisted Tuesday that the state "exists" and vowed that Jerusalem will be its capital.

When asked about the threats by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, President Arafat told journalists in the West Bank town of Ramallah: "We have heard such threats before and we are not surprised to hear them from Netanyahu."

"But it should be clear to all that the Palestinian state exists and that its capital will be Jerusalem, which was occupied by Israel in 1967," he said.

Mr. Arafat has vowed in the past to unilaterally declare an independent state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in May 1999, the end of the five-year period laid down by interim

accords for Israelis and Palestinians to reach a final peace agreement.

Mr. Netanyahu responded to the threat on Monday, saying that if President Arafat "unilaterally proclaims a Palestinian state, Israel will annex the Jordan Valley, other territory and perhaps even everything."

"The more territory Israel controls, the more annexed territory there will be," Mr. Netanyahu told MPs from the far-right Tzomet party, Israeli television reported.

In a striking departure from his headline past and his government's official line, long-time hawk Ariel Sharon said Monday that Israel must "soberly" accept the establishment of a Palestinian state.

"We can't hide our head in the sand... in the wake of the Oslo accords, a Palestinian state is coming into existence," the infrastructure minister told Israel's Channel 2 TV.

"We should see this soberly and take the necessary steps to ensure the dangers [to Israel]

from the establishment of such a state will be minimal," he said. This meant ensuring Israel could keep "areas essential to its security," control over the water supply from the West Bank aquifer and other issues, he said.

The influential Mr. Sharon's statement raised hopes that despite the setbacks to the peace process, a successful conclusion was still possible.

According to the Israel-PLO accords, the two sides are to reach a final peace settlement by May 1999. Under Israel's Labour government which signed the accords, the Palestinians expected that they would be able to upgrade their autonomy into a state.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, elected in 1996, continues to oppose Palestinian independence — in line with his Likud Party's long-standing ideology.

This has prompted Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to suggest that even if there is no agreement with Israel he will declare statehood when the

current interim period runs out in 1999.

In a meeting with rightist lawmakers Monday, Mr. Netanyahu warned that he would react to such a declaration with his own unilateral moves, such as annexing parts and perhaps all of the West Bank, Israel TV reported.

But within the Likud there are also growing signs that the core of opposition to Palestinian statehood is waning — last week Likud's Knesset whip Meir Shalev even said that "a Palestinian state would be 'in keeping with the interests' of Israel."

Mr. Sharon noted the Palestinian autonomy, created in 1994, already has "a prime minister, a government, a parliament, representations... an army and income tax... all the elements of a state exist."

He said he intends to bring concrete proposals outlining Israel's territorial priorities to a meeting Wednesday with Mr. Netanyahu. Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai and Foreign Minister David Levy,

They are to formulate a plan for a further troop pullout in the West Bank, which Israel has promised and which was reaffirmed by the cabinet this week, and on Israel's demands in future final status talks.

Mr. Sharon did not give details Monday, but media reports have said his plan calls for retaining the Jordan River Valley and a buffer zone bordering Israel's narrow coastline in its west, as well as other areas.

The Palestinians have insisted that they should in the end get 90 per cent of the West Bank's territory; currently, they have full or partial autonomy in 27 per cent of the area — land where the vast majority of its Arab population lives.

Mr. Sharon suggested Israel could keep more land if it ensured the Palestinians other things — like contiguous territory not crossed by Israeli zones or roads.

"It's a very difficult and complex negotiation, but I think we can reach an agreement," he said.

Palestinians call on donor nations to push Israel to stop closure

GAZA CITY (AFP) — The Palestinians on Tuesday called on donor countries to pressure Israel to end its closures of the occupied territories and other measures which "are destroying" Palestinian economic plans.

International cooperation minister Nabil Shaath attended a meeting in Gaza City of local representatives of donor nations and Israel to discuss a programme for international aid to the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

"We also discussed that basic difficulty we face, which has been and continues to be Israel's closures and policies which prevent freedom of trade and investment," Mr. Shaath told journalists afterwards.

These measures "are destroying the development plans of the Palestinian Authority," he said.

"If we are able to convince donor nations to pressure the Israeli government to stop these measures, this will give a boost to the Palestinian economy and our development plans," he said. Since 1993, Israel has placed restrictions of varying levels on the entry of Palestinians into Israel for work. Such a closure has been in place permanently since early 1996, at times stopping all entry and even blocking movement between West Bank towns.

The World Bank warned in November that the Palestinian economy was in danger of collapse due to the closures, which

it blamed for a dramatic drop in family incomes in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The Gaza meeting also prepared for a meeting of donor nation representatives due to be held in Paris on Dec. 14-16.

Mr. Shaath said that the Palestinians will present to the Paris meeting their new three-year development plan which totals \$3.5 billion. One billion dollars of that amount is based on pledges made by donor nations but never delivered, while the remaining \$2.5 billion would require new funding, he said.

"We will ask the donor nations to set the amount of funds they will deliver for the first year of the plan," he said.

Israel launches new settlement campaign

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel has started building 120 new homes in a Jewish settlement deep in the West Bank as part of a new settlement expansion campaign that contrasts with new Israeli peace offers to the Palestinians.

For the first time since the right-wing government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu came to office 18 months ago, units are being added to Ariel, a settlement of 15,000 people in the heart of the occupied West Bank, local officials told AFP on Tuesday.

At the same time the Haaretz newspaper reported that the government had issued a tender offer to sell plots for 26 new units in the small Jewish settle-

ment of Nisanit in the Gaza Strip.

It is the first time Israel has authorised building in a Gaza Strip settlement since the previous right-wing government of Yitzhak Shamir — before the 1993 Oslo peace accords which put most of the Gaza Strip under Palestinian rule, the anti-settlement Peace Now movement said.

Ariel mayor, Ron Hanman, said builders recently began work on 120 houses and a tender offer for construction of a further 200 units would be made in the next few days as part of a broader plan to add 3,000 units that would double the size of the settlement.

Three Israeli soldiers wounded in Hizbollah attack in Lebanon

TYRE (AFP) — Three Israeli soldiers were wounded on Tuesday in a rocket attack by Hizbollah guerrillas on a radar installation in southern Lebanon. Lebanese security sources said. The soldiers were wounded when several rockets were fired at an Israeli army position in Bayda in the western sector of the self-declared Israeli "security zone" in southern Lebanon, the sources said. In Israel, the army said two soldiers had suffered moderate injuries and one light wounds. The Islamic Resistance, the military branch of the Hizbollah, claimed responsibility for the attack and said it had destroyed radar at the installation. Shortly after the attack, Israeli warplanes flew over the Tyre area and the Iqlim Toufah hills, a Hizbollah stronghold, at low altitude, police said.

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Troops kill 70 rebels, trap more in Algeria — papers

PARIS (R) — Algerian troops have killed 70 suspected militant rebels, and trapped up to 100 more on Monday, the eighth day of an operation south of Algiers, national newspapers said on Tuesday.

Other rebels have stepped up attacks on villagers to try to loosen the army's siege of their comrades near Larbaa, 25 kilometres south of Algiers, they said.

Al Khabar said the troops, backed by helicopter gunships and air force special commandos, had killed 70 rebels based in a camp carved out at the foot of a mountain near Larbaa.

They were still besieging a rebel unit numbering up to 100 men who specialised in killing pro-government militias in villages and their relatives, it said. The unit is called Fauji Edjdar (Houses

Brigade), Al Khabar said. "Some foreigners, mostly Libyans, were among the besieged gangs," said Liberte newspaper, without giving more details.

The dailies said that rebels who had left the relatively moderate Islamic Salvation Army (AIS) and joined the rival Armed Islamic Group (GIA) were among those trapped.

The AIS, the armed wing of the outlawed Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), declared a ceasefire from Oct. 1 which it said aimed to expose GIA atrocities against civilians.

The GIA said the ceasefire was a sell-out of the Islamist cause, which wants to establish an Islamist state in Algeria.

Newspapers had quoted the Algerian military as saying in October that foreign

Islamists with expertise in explosives had been among rebels then besieged in Ouled Allel area, south of Algiers.

Le Matin newspaper said on Tuesday that gunmen were killing and abducting villagers in Medea and Berronia, south of the capital, to try to loosen the siege on the rebels in nearby Larbaa, the newspaper did not say how many were killed.

Al Khabar said attacks and assassinations had increased in areas near the besieged rebel stronghold. More than 50 people, most of them villagers, were killed last Thursday and Saturday in two massacres in Larbaa and in the southwestern region of Saïda, according to Algerian reports.

Gunmen kidnapped five shepherds with about 100 sheep, goats and cows in Al Hamra Village in Medea, 70 kilometres south of Algiers, on Saturday, Liberte reported on Tuesday.

Troops killed up to 150 rebels in a similar siege in July in the neighbouring Hataath area, an operation followed by three months of the worst massacres of civilians since Algeria's civil strife began in 1992.

No one claimed responsibility for the massacres. The government has blamed Islamist guerrillas for these killings and others in which thousands of civilians have died.

Over 65,000 people have been killed in violence in Algeria since early 1992, when the authorities cancelled a general election in which Islamists had taken a commanding lead.

Hizbollah urges Hamas to focus on soldiers, settlers

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — The Lebanese Shiite movement Hizbollah has urged the main Palestinian Islamist movement to halt suicide bombings against Israeli civilians and concentrate on attacking soldiers and settlers in the occupied territories, the Haaretz newspaper reported Tuesday.

The newspaper's military editor, quoting "authoritative sources" in the Islamist movements, said senior leaders of Hizbollah had told their counterparts in the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) to adopt the guerrilla warfare tactics they have been using against Israeli troops in south Lebanon.

Deadly Hizbollah attacks on Israeli forces occupying a self-declared buffer zone in south Lebanon in recent months have sparked a fierce political debate in Israel and growing calls for a unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon.

Hamas leaders have been holding talks with both Hizbollah and Damascus-based Palestinian groups on whether opponents of peace accords with Israel should pursue suicide attacks against Israeli cities, Haaretz said.

The most recent Hamas suicide attacks in Jerusalem in July and September drew sharp condemnation from both the West and Arab governments and steeled the resolve of Israel's right-wing government to resist further extensions of Palestinian self-rule.

According to Haaretz, Hizbollah officials have argued that the suicide attacks inside

Israel simply stir Israeli desire for revenge.

Attacks targeting soldiers and settlers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip would on the contrary prompt public debate on the value of remaining in the territories and could lead to an Israeli withdrawal from some or all of the occupied areas, they were reported as saying.

Haaretz, without making its sources clear, said Hamas officials showed interest in the Hizbollah "tactical guidelines."

The spiritual leader of Hamas, Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, recently suggested the group could suspend attacks against Israeli civilians, but only on condition that Israel halt "aggressive" policies such as housing demolitions and land confiscations in the occupied areas. Since the start of the year, Hizbollah and other Lebanese guerrilla groups have killed 39 Israeli soldiers, the highest one-year death toll since Israel set up its self-declared "security zone" in south Lebanon in 1985.

The losses have prompted a widespread debate, including inside the Israeli army, over whether Israel should simply abandon the security zone and concentrate on defending its northern border.

The government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has rejected such calls, saying an Israeli withdrawal can only follow a political agreement with Lebanon and Syria that would ensure the dismantling of Hizbollah and other anti-Israeli guerrilla groups.

Israeli army destroys two Palestinian homes, one arrested

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — The Israeli army destroyed two Palestinian homes north of Jerusalem Tuesday on grounds they had been built without government authorisation, a military spokesman said.

One Palestinian was arrested for trying to stop the heavily-guarded destruction crews in the A-Ram village north of Jerusalem, said the army's civil administration spokesman, Peter Lerner.

The other home destroyed was located in Anata, between Jerusalem and the West Bank city of Ramallah

and housed 18 Palestinians, Mr. Lerner added.

The areas in which the structures were located are under total Israeli security and civilian control.

The Israeli army regularly demolishes Palestinian homes which were built without permits from the military authorities in the West Bank.

Palestinians complain that the army almost never gives building permits to Palestinians in the 70 per cent of the West Bank which it controls, forcing them to build "illegally."

Jihad member starts hunger strike in Palestinian prison

GAZA CITY (AFP) — A member of the Islamic Jihad group imprisoned by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) announced Tuesday he had gone on hunger strike demanding his release.

"I have tired of repeated promises [of release] and so I began an open-ended hunger strike on Saturday for my freedom," Omar Abdullah Shallah, sentenced to life imprisonment in 1995, said in a statement received by AFP.

Mr. Shallah, the brother of the Damascus-based Jihad leader Ramadan Shallah, was jailed by the PNA for connection to a Jihad bombing that killed more than 20 Israeli soldiers in January 1995.

Mr. Shallah said there was "no evidence to convict me, and I was put on trial in the dead of night by security courts which sentenced me to life for a crime I did not confess to."

"I have received promise after promise for my release, but still three years have passed," he said.

He called on the "lovers of freedom in the world" to help "attain my freedom from the Authority, which has demanded the release from Israel of Itai Elayan

for her imprisonment without charges."

Ms. Elayan, a Jihad member from the West Bank town of Bethlehem, held a 40-day hunger strike after her arrest by Israel on Oct. 21 but agreed to end it this week after her family said Israel had promised not to renew her administrative detention when it ends in January.

The PNA has dozens of members of Jihad and the larger Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) in its prisons, arrested in crackdowns against the groups for their campaigns of anti-Israeli violence.



VOICES IN THE WILDERNESS: U.S. protesters (from left to right) Joe Zito, Bert Sacks, Dan Handelman and Randall Mullins hold up a banner during a news conference outside the U.N. offices in Amman Tuesday. Bert Sacks, who led the U.S. group 'Voices in the Wilderness' to Baghdad last month as part of their campaign for the lifting of U.N. sanctions, said American bombing of Basra in the 1991 Gulf war and continuing sanctions had destroyed Iraq's water sanitation plants. He said the contaminated water had become the main 'biological weapon' in Iraq, not those which President Saddam Hussein is suspected of hiding from U.N. weapons inspectors (Reuters photo)

Arafat to attend Tehran OIC meeting

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat will make his first visit to Iran in over 15 years to attend the summit of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), officials said on Tuesday.

Mr. Arafat, who is OIC vice-president, will leave for Tehran on Monday for the three-day summit, which starts on Dec. 9, his political adviser Nahil Abu Rudeina told AFP.

He will deliver a speech to the summit "calling on Islamic nations to create a

mechanism to support Jerusalem and exert greater efforts to save the Holy City from Israeli plans to Judaize it," Mr. Abu Rudeina said.

Mr. Arafat's last visit to Tehran was soon after the 1979 Islamic revolution, when he met with its spiritual leader Ayatollah Khomeini.

But relations between Tehran and the PLO deteriorated in the late 1980s, when Iran was angered by what it considered Palestinian support for Baghdad in

the eight-year Iran-Iraq war.

Iran has rejected self-rule accords with Israel and Palestinian officials have accused Tehran of supporting the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), Mr. Arafat's main rivals, who have led a campaign of anti-Israeli violence since 1994.

Heads of state, kings, prime ministers and other representatives of the OIC's 55 member countries are to gather in the Iranian capital for the summit.

Qadhafi meets Sudanese opposition leader

TUNIS (R) — Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi has met Sudanese opposition leader Sadeq Mahdi in Tripoli as part of an opposition campaign to coordinate an end to Sudan's war.

Libyan state television, monitored in Tunis, late on Monday reported the talks but gave no details.

A Tripoli-based diplomat said Mr. Mahdi was seeking coordination among Sudan's neighbours to find a way out of the country's political crisis.

Mr. Mahdi, who was prime minister before he was ousted by a coup in 1989, is head of the Umma Party, part of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) campaigning to topple the Khartoum government headed by President Omar Hassan al-Bashir.

Umma Party officials in Cairo said it was Mr. Mahdi's first visit to Tripoli since 1988, when he was still prime minister.

"We want Libya to understand our point of view. This visit is an important development as it is the first by an opposition leader since 1989," said Salah Galal, head of the Umma office.

JORDAN TELEVISION

PROGRAMME TWO
14:10: Jonny Quest
14:30: An Boy
15:00: Spell Binder
15:30: Monsters Today
16:00: Border Town
16:30: Neighbours
17:00: French Programme
19:00: News in French
19:30: News Headlines
19:35: Doc. — High Tech Culture
20:00: Step By Step
20:30: Challenges
21:10: Kung Fu
22:00: News in English
23:15: Land's End

PRAYER TIMES

04:53: Fajr
06:14: Sunrise/Duha
11:25: Dhuhur
14:13: Asr
16:36: Maghreb
17:58: Isha

CHURCHES

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Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

661757 Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366 Anglican Church Tel. 652826 Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331 Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261 St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751 Amman International Church Tel. 5516245 Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328 German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 688404 The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932 Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691 The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295 English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190	Agaha 13:24 Deserts 15:08 Jordan Valley 14:23 Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 18, Aqaba 25 Humidity readings: Amman 51 per cent, Aqaba 37 per cent.	Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630541 Civil Defence Emergency 199 Rescue Police 192, 621111, 655777 Fire Brigade 617101 Blood Bank 775121 Highway Police 843402 Traffic Police 896390 Public Security Department 631021 Hotel Complaints 605800 Price Complaints 661176 Water and Sewerage Complaints 897462 Amman Municipality Complaints 787111 Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121 Overseas Calls 010230 Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101 Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101 Jordan Television 773111 Radio Jordan 774111 Water Authority 680101 Jordan Electricity Authority 815615 Electric Power Company 636381 RJ Flight Information 08-53200 Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200	Hussein Medical Centre 81381332 Khalidi Maternity, 644280/6 Ajliah Maternity, 642441/2 Ajliah Amman Maternity 642362 Malha, J. Amman 656140 Palestine, Shmeisani 607071 Shmeisani Hospital 609131 University Hospital 845845 Al-Muasher Hospital 672279 The Islamic, Abdali 6612637 Al-Ahli, Abdali 6641646 Italian, Al-Muhajreen 771013 Al-Ishar, 77511126 Army, Marka 89161115 Queen Alia Hospital 642240/50 Amal Hospital 674155 The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199 ZARQA: Zarqa Govt. Hospital 09983323 Zarqa National Hospital 09983323 Ibn Sina Hospital 09986742 Al Hikma Modern Hospital 09989991 IRBID: Princess Basma Hospital 02275555 Greek Catholic Hospital 02272275 Ibn Ali Nafees Hospital 02247101 AQABA: Princess Haya Hospital 03314111	FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. 08/532001 where it should always be verified. Information on other flights are supplied on phone 08 (527001) or 08/532501.	09:30 Al 'Arish (PF) 10:15 Doha, Al Hudaydah (Y) 10:30 Jeddah (SV) 10:50 Kuwait (KU) 11:30 Tunis (TU) 13:25 Doha, Abu Dhabi (GF) 13:50 Tel Aviv (LY) 14:30 Doha (QR) 15:05 Vienna (OS) 15:30 Algiers (AH) 16:05 Karachi, Abu Dhabi (PK) 20:10 Beirut (ME) 21:10 Paris, Damascus (AF) 22:30 Athens (GA) 23:15 London (BA) 23:30 London, Beirut (BA) 23:35 Amsterdam (KL)	09:30 Bombay (RJ) 20:15 Bahrain, Doha (RJ) 20:30 New Delhi (RJ) 21:00 Calcutta, Bangkok (RJ) 21:15 Dubai, Muscat (RJ) 22:45 Sanaa (RJ) Other Flights 00:35 Amsterdam (KL) 01:55 Bucharest (RO) 06:35 Larnaca (GZ) 08:00 Beirut (ME) 08:25 London (BA) 10:30 Cairo (MS) 10:30 Al 'Arish (PF) 11:15 Al Hudaydah, Aden (Y) 12:00 Kuwait (KU) 12:00 Jeddah (SV) 14:10 Tunis (TU) 14:20 Sharjah (AH) 15:15 Bahrain, Muscat (GF) 15:10 Tel Aviv (LY) 15:30 Doha (QR) 15:50 Vienna (OS) 19:30 Abu Dhabi, Karachi (PK) 23:55 Damascus, Paris (AF) Royal Wings (RW) 07:45 Aqaba (RW) 09:05 Amman (QAIA) (RW) 09:50 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW) 17:20 Tel Aviv (RW) 18:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW) 21:20 Aqaba (RW) 22:50 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW) DEPARTURES 08:25 Amsterdam, New York (RJ) 09:25 Rome (RJ) 10:40 Berlin, London (RJ) 11:00 Istanbul (RJ) 19:30 Colombo (RJ) 19:35 Beirut (RJ) 20:05 Riyadh, Dhahran (RJ) 20:10 Cairo (MS)
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Home N Queen inaug on micro-en

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor Tuesday inaugurated a regional seminar on micro and small enterprise promotion for women in the Arab region, opening in a press release.

The three-day seminar, which was organised by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the Noor Al-Foundation (NAF), included panels, presentations and workshops on micro-enterprises, business development, vocational training, and social services, as well as visits to some generating projects established by local non-governmental organisations.

Queen Noor, in her presentation, said the last decade had witnessed a successful micro-enterprise movement in the Arab world, which had contributed to the economic development of the region. She said the micro-enterprise movement was a natural development in the Arab world, which had contributed to the economic development of the region.

The Queen said the micro-enterprise movement was a natural development in the Arab world, which had contributed to the economic development of the region. She said the micro-enterprise movement was a natural development in the Arab world, which had contributed to the economic development of the region.

Meeting exam Women to win

AMMAN (Petra) — The annual election of the new president of the Arab Women's Union (AWU) was held in Amman on Tuesday. The meeting, which was attended by the president of the board of directors of the AWU, was held in a hall in Amman. The meeting was held in a hall in Amman. The meeting was held in a hall in Amman.

Agriculture min preparations for

AMMAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Agriculture is preparing for the annual agricultural exhibition to be held in Amman on Tuesday. The exhibition is one of the most important events in the agricultural sector. The exhibition is one of the most important events in the agricultural sector.

WHAT'S CHRISTMAS CHOIR

Annual YWCA Christmas class through Sunday, at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

Exhibitions
Plastic abstract art by Mohammad Al-Jarrah at the Royal Cultural Centre, until Dec. 7.
Paintings by Ghada Dahdaleh at the Arab Cultural Centre, until Dec. 10.
Paintings by Ammar Khammas at the Arab Cultural Centre, until Dec. 12.
Paintings by Saadi Al Kaabi at the Arab Cultural Centre, until Dec. 12.

Queen inaugurates regional seminar on micro-enterprises for women

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor Tuesday inaugurated a regional seminar on micro and small enterprise promotion for women in the Arab region, according to a press release Tuesday.

The three-day seminar, which was organized by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Noor Al Hussein Foundation (NHF), will include panels, presentations, and workshops on credit, marketing, business advisory services, regional case studies, and vocational training, as well as visits to income-generating projects established by local non-governmental organizations, the press release stated.

Queen Noor, in her presentation, said the last decade has "clarified how successful micro-enterprises can simultaneously enhance the personal status of Arab women and the health of Arab economies. Female-targeted micro credit and enterprises today comprise the most effective medium-strategy for increasing Arab women's contributions to national economic development."

According to the Queen, there are various organizations in Jordan, among them NGOs, government agencies, and financial institutions, that provide micro-credit through a network of local communities. The gov-

ernment has also embraced micro-credit as a critical component of its social productivity programme, designed to fight poverty and unemployment, according to the announcement.

Queen Noor said micro enterprises have a "strong training component [and] are the most effective way to increase women's contributions to their local economies, in a manner that is culturally acceptable, economically realistic, and sensitive to preserving the traditional social cohesion and moral integrity of Arab society."

The Queen added that micro enterprises in the Arab World are especially important in view of the "relatively low level of women's participation in economic or public life. Arab women's participation in the formal labour force is 25 per cent versus 39 per cent in developing countries, while Arab women's political participation is 4 per cent, well below the 10 per cent average in the developing world." She noted that this is in sharp contrast to the rapid pace of Arab women's progress in other fields such as education and health.

Assistant Director General for ILO Activities in Arab States Shukri Dajani said this meeting, "which focuses on female employment, is

but one modest attempt to rectify the imbalances caused by global recession and to search for ways to achieve social and economic stability."

"Female employment is an indispensable aspect for achieving sustainable human development and poverty eradication. It is also an undeniable fact that women's participation in socio-economic development is an integral and important component of nation building," he added.

Minister of Labour Saleh Khasawneh noted that micro and small enterprises "create job opportunities at a lower cost and are a solid foundation on which sustainable human development is based."

NHF development specialist Sima Bahous noted that the Fourth World Conference on Women and the United Nations Copenhagen Social Summit have emphasized women's underutilized potential in contributing to economic growth, adding that as a result of the success of micro-credit programmes targeting women, the World Bank has set aside \$200 million for loans to poor women entrepreneurs.

Dr. Bahous said the Noor Al Hussein Foundation (NHF), in cooperation with the National Federation of

Business and Professional Women's Clubs, has initiated small business counselling, which offers business advice and services for women entrepreneurs.

The concept of micro-credit began more than two decades ago, when Mohammad Yunus, an economics professor in Bangladesh, loaned \$27 to 42 poor people to buy necessities for their income-generating activities. His pilot lending evolved into what is today the largest micro-credit bank in the world, the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, reaching two million people with over \$1 billion in loans. Leading micro lending programmes boast repayment rates as high as 98 per cent — greater than that of commercial banks.

According to the UNDP, a 1996 World Bank survey in Jordan has shown that as much as JD24 million has been made available to 7,000 borrowers and the available loan funds are expected to double in the next two years. Some NGOs, such as the Near East Foundation, have tailored their programmes to appeal to Islamic values by providing "murabah" or interest-free credit, the announcement read.

HRH Princess Ali attended the inauguration ceremony with the Queen.

Minister opens U.N. refugee workshop by examining Kingdom's past services

By Lima Nahil
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Minister of Interior Nahir Rashid Tuesday opened a two-day workshop on "Refugee Law" by stating Jordan's stand with regard to refugees and pointing to the Kingdom's continued endeavours towards hosting refugees and providing essential services over the past decades.

"Jordan has opened its doors for all people seeking refuge in the Kingdom, especially those from neighbouring countries, out of its deep respect for human rights," the minister said in the opening address at the meeting, which was organized by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Non-governmental and

voluntary organizations extended a helping hand to Jordan when the country was flooded by more than a million refugees during the 1990 Gulf crisis and the Kingdom arranged for their repatriation, the minister said.

Jordan has been closely cooperating with the UNHCR regional office in Amman to provide assistance and protection to refugees of various ethnic origins and is continuing this endeavour in accordance with U.N. agreements on refugees, the minister pointed out.

In view of the importance of the refugee question, several national departments, including the Public Security Department and the Ministry of Interior, are participating in this meeting to dis-

cuss services for the refugees, according to Mr. Rashid.

UNHCR representative in Jordan Zobia Hassim-Ashagrie praised Jordan's efforts to provide for refugees. She said her office signed a cooperation agreement with Jordan in July to promote further collaboration.

"Refugees have rights that should be respected prior to, during, and after the process of seeking asylum," stated Ms. Hassim-Ashagrie, adding that "respect for human rights is a necessary condition for both preventing and resolving today's refugee flows."

"The work of the U.N. in the fields of both human rights and refugees is inextricably linked in the sense that both entities share a

common purpose, which is safeguarding human dignity."

"The international community has now recognised that human rights violations are a major cause of refugee situations. While efforts continue to remedy the problem at the source, attention is [now] focused on the difficulties that asylum-seekers encounter after they leave their countries of origin," she said.

In order to address the different facets of refugees' problems, there is need for understanding, coordination, and above all, commitment and compassion.

Participants in the meeting will listen to lectures and watch documentaries depicting issues relevant to refugees, care for displaced peoples, and refugee rights.

Court postpones trial of man accused of murdering wife, four children

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Criminal Court Tuesday postponed the trial of a 40-year-old father accused of killing his wife and four of his six children in Karak in May after the prosecution's witnesses failed to appear in court.

Awad Mohammad reportedly opened fire on his family on May 13, killing his 35-year-old wife, Samar Salah, and his children, Ahmad, seven, Basma, six, Sahar, one, and Ibrahim, four months, then went and turned himself in claiming

the murders constituted a crime of honour.

During last week's court session, the victim's mother, Sabah Ali, 45, testified that her daughter was frequently "assaulted by the defendant, and he had threatened to kill her."

"My daughter informed me that her husband used to beat her and kick her out of the house with her children. He also asked her to go and find him another wife, and told her that if she refused, he was going to kill her," the victim's mother told the court.

Ms. Salah's father, Salah

Hussein, 57, testified that his daughter had constant quarrels with her husband, who also used to beat her.

According to the prosecution charge sheet, the suspect plotted to kill his wife and children after ten years of marriage "because he suspected that the children were not his."

On the night of the incident, the suspect locked his wife and six children in his house, drew a gun he had purchased few months before the incident, and shot his family at close range. When he ran out of ammunition, he grabbed a

kitchen knife and stabbed the rest, the charge sheet said.

Close friends and relatives of the suspect told the Jordan Times shortly after the incident that Mr. Mohammad had suffered from financial problems and "that was the actual reason why he killed his family."

The court, presided over by Judge Mohammad Ajarmeh and including Judges Issa Hamdan and Mifteh Mubaidin, set Dec. 14 as the new date to hear the final prosecution witnesses in the case.

Meeting examines failure of women to win seats in elections

AMMAN (Petra) — The outcome of last month's general elections and the causes behind the failure of women to reach Parliament were among the main topics discussed at a meeting Tuesday chaired by HRH Princess Basma.

The meeting, which was attended by the president and members of the board of the Jordanian Women's Union, discussed the impact of the one person, one vote electoral system as well as the absence of a quota for women in Parliament.

The participants under-

lined the need for the introduction of amendments to the present law or to the new projected draft elections law, which is expected to be presented by the government to the 13th Parliament.

They also demanded that the draft law be endorsed by the women's sector before being ratified in its final version.

In his speech from the Throne last Saturday, His Majesty King Hussein declared that the government would introduce a new draft elections law.

Speakers at the meeting underlined the need for creating pressure groups and enhancing the role of civic institutions so that they can help pave the way for Jordanian women to reach decision-making positions.

The participants suggested that an enlarged meeting with the participation of all members of the various women's unions be held to work out a mechanism to achieve this goal.

They praised Princess Basma's continuing role in promoting the status of Jordanian women.

Road accidents kill nine, injure 41 during one week in November

AMMAN (Petra) — Nine persons died and 41 others were injured in 740 road accidents in Jordan during the third week of November, according to a Traffic Department statistical bulletin released Tuesday.

The bulletin said the Amman governorate had the greatest number of these accidents, accounting for 440, followed by Zarqa with 76 and Irbid with 69.

As for the casualties in these accidents, 28.6 per cent were under ten years of age, while the drivers of the vehicles involved in these accidents were aged between 21 and 30, accounting for 40.7 per cent of the total number of drivers, according to the bulletin.

Nearly 20 per cent of the accidents were due to drivers ignoring traffic regulations concerning priority on the road, the report stated.

These figures represent an increase in the number of accidents by 32 deaths by four, and injuries by 26 compared with figures from the same week of the same month in 1996, the bulletin said.

Agriculture ministry announces preparations for forestation works

AMMAN (Petra) — The Range and Forestation Department at the Ministry of Agriculture Tuesday said it has prepared eight million tree saplings to be planted on 20,000 dunums of land during the upcoming agricultural season.

Director Mousa Abbadi said the 70 types of saplings will be distributed to various government agencies and individuals. He added that the department has also produced shrub tree saplings to be planted on 20,000 dunums of pasture lands.

Normally, most of the saplings that are produced at the ministry's nurseries are planted during the agricultural season and during the country's Arbor Day

celebrations, which start on Jan. 15.

The department has created 15,000 dunums of pasture lands in the eastern badia (desert land) areas of Al Sarh and Al Qasab, he said.

Mr. Abbadi also noted that his department has produced saplings to be used as Christmas trees, which will be sold to the public this month for nominal prices.

He called on the public to refrain from cutting down forest trees for use as Christmas trees, since such trees can be bought from the department.

He warned that heavy fines will be imposed on violators of the laws prohibiting the felling of trees without permission.

Meanwhile, Mohammad Sheikh, head of the Ministry of Agriculture's fruit trees department, said his department has produced more than one million olive tree saplings, which, along with other fruit trees, will be sold to the public at nominal prices.

Of these trees, he said, 100,000 saplings will be given to government departments to be planted on their grounds and 100,000 olive tree saplings will be presented to the Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture together with another 40,000 fruit tree saplings as a gift.

He said 15,000 olive tree saplings and 5,000 other fruit tree saplings will be sent to Yemen as a gift.

Students' eight-day strike ended

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Scores of policemen in riot-gear Tuesday surrounded the Amman Polytechnic Faculty and forced most of its 1,800 students to end their eight-day strike to improve services.

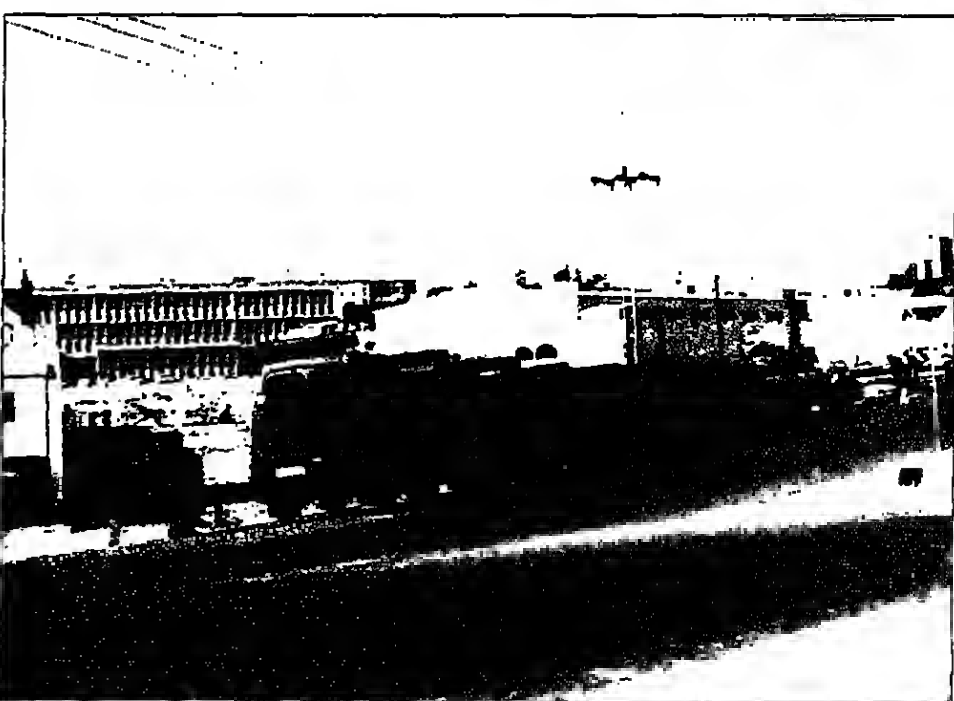
Over 20 police vans surrounded the campus of the faculty, a subsidiary of Balqa'a Applied Sciences University, shortly after it opened its gates but no forces entered the site. Faculty guards barred reporters from entering the campus as plainclothes security personnel watched.

"The strike is over and everything is back to normal," Balqa'a University Chairman Khalid Tougan told the Jordan Times Tuesday. "More than 90 per cent of the students attended their classes today," he added.

He defended the university's decision to stage a show of force to end the strike — a move that was criticised by most students.

"We have the right to take necessary measures and the police has the right to stand at the faculty gate," Dr. Tougan said.

However, students disagreed. "The police scene frightened us all, especially the girls," said one student who requested anonymity.



Police vans are parked outside of the Amman Polytechnic Faculty campus Tuesday morning. Students at the university ended their eight-day strike and returned to classes. (Photo courtesy of Al Sabeel)

"Police started arriving at the campus in the early hours of Tuesday to frighten students and force them to end their strike," another student said. "And they succeeded."

He and others said the 12 students who led the protest campaign were summoned by the administration for interrogation and would most probably be dismissed. "The university penalties

will be applicable to all students who took part in the strike and broke the rules," said Dr. Tougan.

He did not elaborate further.

The 12 students, most of them affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood movement, are the chairmen of students in various departments in the academy.

They were pressing management to improve services

and study plans and allow them to set up a students council.

Other demands included the appointment of a resident doctor and enacting a medical insurance plan.

"All these demands were in the process of being implemented. It was a matter of time," said Dr. Tougan, who together with senior faculty staff met with students.

WHAT'S GOING ON

CHRISTMAS CHOIR

* Annual YWCA Christmas classical choir (through Sunday), at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Plastic (abstract) art by Mohammad Qaddumi at the Royal Cultural Centre, until Dec. 7.

* Works by Ghada Dahdaleh at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5537598), until Dec. 10.

* Paintings by Ammar Khamash at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh, until Dec. 12.

* Paintings by Saadi Al Kaabi at Orient Gallery (Tel. 681303/4), until Dec. 4.

* An exhibition of prints by Algerian artist Koraishi, and calligraphy by Iraqi artist Massoudi, inspired by the poems of Mahmoud Darwish, at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until Dec. 31. Also displaying paintings by Jordanian artist Nasr Abdul Aziz, and works by contemporary Arab artists.

* Works by Khalid Khreis at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman, until Dec. 10.

* Exhibition of wallhangings and weavings by Bashar Katheem and others at Noor Al Hussein Foundation, off Wadi Saqra Street (Tel. 699131/2) until Dec. 4.

* "Journey Within" by Pakistani artist Gulgee and his son, sculptor Amin Gulgee, at the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts (Tel. 630128), until Dec. 15.

By Hind-Lara Mango
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The government's intention to introduce a new professional unions law, seen by many as an attempt to weaken these associations, has prompted Islamists and nationalists to join forces ahead of elections for the different engineering branches of the 38,000-member Jordan Engineers Association (JEA).

Islamists and nationalists, for decades in opposing camps, have agreed on a common agenda for the Dec. 3-5 elections for the councils of five engineering branches.

A leading nationalist, Abdul Rahman Bitar, told the Jordan Times that the JEA, after the government amended the

Press and Publication Law and the Elections Law, felt that professional associations would be next.

"We felt that we [Islamists and nationalists] had to work together to provide the necessary mechanism to defend our role," he said.

Professional associations, which include doctors, lawyers, writers, and pharmacists, have opposed normalisation with Israel since the signing of the Wadi Araba peace treaty in 1994.

On many occasions these associations have boycotted and even expelled members who have had contacts with Israel. They have come under increased criticism from the government, which insists that associations limit their work to professional matters.

'Azam Huneid, spokesperson for the Islamists at the JEA, said what motivated Islamists and nationalists to join forces is the feeling that they had to mobilise the greatest number of engineers to defend the cause of the associations.

On Saturday, His Majesty King Hussein told Parliament that the government will introduce a new professional unions law.

"My government will present to your esteemed assembly a package of laws and legislation. Some will modernise and develop existing laws and legislation," the King said in his speech from the Throne at the opening session of the 13th Parliament.

Activists expect the new law to limit the work of asso-

ciations to professional issues.

They also expect the new law to make membership a voluntary choice.

Mr. Bitar said it was not true that the associations were not doing their professional work. Although he admitted that there are many shortcomings in the present legislation, the JEA was still working within the limits of the current law.

"Our legislation should be developed and upgraded to tackle professional issues in a more effective manner and to address the changing needs of society," nationalist Khalid Ramadan stated.

"You cannot separate the political from the professional. Issues that affect other citizens or the state at large also affect engineers," Mr. Bitar added.

"In the seventies, when the law was introduced, there were only a few thousand engineers, mostly located in the Amman region," Mr. Ramadan told the Jordan Times.

"But now, with 38,000 engineers scattered all over the Kingdom, it's much better to divide Jordan into different areas, each with its own engineering council to address local problems," he stated.

Engineers fear that by abolishing compulsory membership, the association will be weakened and the quality of work will go down.

Compulsory membership, according to Mr. Ramadan, gives "the association the responsibility to monitor engineering projects and ensure quality control."

U.S. says it would walk away from bad climate pact

WASHINGTON (R) — The United States staked out a tough position on the opening day of global warming treaty talks in Japan Monday, saying it would walk away from any agreement it did not deem workable.

U.S. President Bill Clinton told reporters in Washington he would send Vice President Al Gore, regarded as a strong environmentalist voice in the administration, to the talks in Kyoto.

But he also made clear Mr. Gore would be going next week only to reiterate the U.S. position, not to make any deals, and said the United States would take its own route to fighting climate change if it could not sign onto a deal in Kyoto.

"We're certainly going to negotiate in good faith, but we have to negotiate within the framework of our principles," Mr. Clinton said before a budget policy meeting with his top advisers.

Mr. Gore said: "We are perfectly prepared to walk away from an agreement that we don't think will work." The talks in Kyoto represented "the beginning of the process, not the end of the process," he said.

Regardless of the outcome of the Kyoto talks, the United States would continue to pursue efforts to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and other "greenhouse" gases thought to lead to global warming, Mr. Clinton said.

"We're going to have a

programme to pursue our course and we're going to do it whatever happens at Kyoto. We're going to work really hard at this now," he said.

"What our objective has to be is to dramatically slow, freeze, and then reduce greenhouse gas emissions for the developed countries, and then get developing countries to do the same thing so that over the course of the next few decades we avoid ... a dramatic warming of the planet," he said.

The rhetoric echoed Mr. Clinton's stance on an international treaty to ban landmines, which the United States refused to sign in September. Mr. Clinton said then, however, that the United States would reduce its landmine arsenal on its own.

Speaking at a Democratic fund-raising dinner later, Mr. Clinton underscored the importance of building public support for a global climate treaty. "It is imperative ... to build public support for having an aggressive approach to climate," Mr. Clinton told a group of Democratic business leaders.

"This isn't like the balanced budget that will take four or five years this is something we have to work on for 20 to 30 years. But we have to begin today," Mr. Clinton said.

The decision to send Mr. Gore followed indications from Kyoto that other delegations at the talks have shown a will to reach an

agreement, despite a wide gulf in initial positions. White House spokesman Mike McCurry told reporters.

He said Mr. Gore was an expert on climate change and was best positioned to state the U.S. position clearly.

"Prior to the opening of this conference ... there didn't seem to be much likelihood that differences would be bridged," he said. "But our impression is ... that there really is a determination within the international community to try to address this issue forthrightly."

Under Secretary of State Stuart Eizenstat, a veteran trade and economic expert, would continue to lead the U.S. negotiating team, Mr. Clinton said.

"The vice president is going there to announce our policy and to be there and show how important it is," Mr. Clinton said.

The climate talks, which involve delegations from 160 nations, began Monday in Kyoto, and higher level negotiations were to begin next Monday.

Mr. Clinton's senior environmental policy adviser Katie McGinty admitted achieving consensus would be difficult.

"We've got a tough uphill battle here," McGinty told CNN. "There is a lot of opportunity for failure in Kyoto because the issues are so difficult. But it's a false choice to say that action on climate change is bad for the economy or bad for jobs," efforts to halt cli-

mate change could add billions of dollars to the U.S. economy, she said.

White House aides said Mr. Gore would speak Monday outlining the U.S. position, then return that day to Washington.

The United States, under heavy pressure from industries reliant on carbon-dioxide-emitting fossil fuels, has taken a relatively modest stance going into the talks.

It has proposed limiting emissions of greenhouse gases at 1990 levels between 2008 and 2012, while the European Union wants a 15 per cent cut in emissions from 1990 levels by 2010.

Mr. Clinton said Monday it would be harder for the United States to reach the target it proposed than it would be for other developed countries because its economic growth has been much stronger during the 1990s.

Mr. Clinton will discuss the issue with European Commission President Jacques Santer later this week in Washington.

The United States also has insisted that developing countries participate, in some way, in any treaty that sets binding emissions limits on developed nations.

Monday in Kyoto, the United States made a significant change in its position — saying different levels of cuts could be set for different countries.

Mr. Clinton and Mr. Gore said they would continue to closely monitor the negotiations.



A house and car are burnt out after a bushfire raged through Menai on the southern outskirts of Sydney (Reuters photo)

2 firefighters killed as fires ring Sydney

SYDNEY (R) — Two firefighters were killed Tuesday as bushfires raged in southeastern Australia, reaching the outskirts of Sydney, forcing the evacuation of schools and destroying homes.

"I have just received a statement confirming two people are dead. They are believed to be firefighters," an ambulance spokesman said.

The firefighters, both men, were killed battling blazes in heavily wooded hills ringing rural Lithgow, 100 km northwest of Sydney.

"It is believed the two were overcome by smoke and burned," the spokesman told Reuters.

A school near Lithgow in Sydney's southern outskirts was evacuated and a police station was also damaged by fire, police said. About

100 elderly residents of a nursing home in the city's north were on standby to be evacuated.

Around a dozen homes were reported destroyed.

New South Wales State Premier Bob Carr told a news conference continuing high temperatures and winds meant the fires were likely to become worse later in the week.

"The weather predictions are very, very worrying," Mr. Carr said. "They suggest that Saturday will be a horrific day in weather terms. There will be some relief between now and then but leading to horrific combinations of factors Saturday."

Firefighters said the fire conditions were worse than those prior to January 1994, when Sydney was encircled by bushfires, which destroyed more than 100

homes, killed four people and left ash on city beaches. The worst fire was 155 km in circumference at Connabarabran, 400 km northwest of Sydney, and had destroyed an estimated 130,000 hectares.

Fire officials said about 215 Australian army and air force personnel were helping firefighters battle other outbreaks northwest of Sydney, while the New South Wales State Rural Fire Service (RFS) issued a list of emergency guidelines.

"Currently controlled or contained fires may break containment lines and burn into populated areas," the RFS said in a statement. The fires in Sydney's south had been burning for several days and had been whipped up by strong winds and

"Certainly the situation at the moment is very serious," Gilly Paxton, spokeswoman for the New South Wales Rural Fire Service, said on ABC Radio.

The bushfires reached Sydney's outer limits earlier Tuesday, enveloping the city in a dirty grey blanket of smoke while morning joggers on famous Bondi beach were greeted with the pungent smell of burning eucalyptus.

New South Wales Environment Protection Authority spokesman John Dengate warned of severe air pollution which could have serious effects for the elderly and those with respiratory disorders.

"The figures have been right off the scale this morning. It's quite an unusual event," Mr. Dengate was quoted as saying in The Daily Telegraph newspaper.

Australia PM says land law review would harm government

CANBERRA (R) — Australian Prime Minister John Howard, under increasing pressure to review his controversial aboriginal land rights legislation, said Tuesday that to back down now would only harm the government further.

Mr. Howard also repeated earlier warnings that his conservative liberal-national coalition would be forced to call an early election if the upper house of parliament, the senate, failed to pass the bill in an acceptable form.

"We have faced a ferociously unbalanced press campaign on this issue. My intuition about public opinion is that it is a little different from what I read in the morning press," coalition spokesman Kevin Andrews quoted Mr. Howard as telling a party room meeting.

"If we dump the legislation it would look like we're walking away from it," the spokesman quoted him as saying.

"He said that every instinct in his political body tells him that we will be held in greater contempt by those who urge us to change," Mr. Andrews said.

According to the

spokesman, Mr. Howard had told coalition politicians that the government would face a sustained attack from all state governments as well as from the farming and mining industries if it reviewed the legislation.

But Mr. Howard had not revealed whether he would accept changes to the legislation forced by the senate Monday night.

Key independent Senator Brian Harradine joined with non-government parties to reject the government's six-year sunset clause, which limits native title claims to 2003.

The senate also voted to extend native title to include a spiritual connection with the land. Under the government's bill, only Aborigines who could prove a physical connection with the land would be allowed to make native title claims.

"It's a question of looking at what the amendments are, and whether or not, as a matter of judgment, they fall within the 10-point (native title) plan or not," Mr. Andrews said.

"But there wasn't a discussion about any particular amendments as to whether or not they fell within or outside the 10-

point plan."

Under the constitution, Mr. Howard can dissolve both houses of parliament and call an early election if the senate rejects the legislation a second time at least three months after the first vote.

Mr. Howard also warned government members of the need to resolve the native title issue as quickly as possible.

Recent opinion polls have shown slipping support for the coalition with the government now about seven points behind the Labour opposition. Compared with its eight-point lead when it won power in March 1996.

"He said that he sensed that there's a growing weariness in the community with the debate, and that people in the community want us to get on with it and resolve the issue," Mr. Andrews said.

Mr. Howard is pushing for parliamentary approval of his native title bill by Christmas, saying it would end uncertainty over a high court ruling that Aboriginal and farmers' rights could co-exist on pastoral land leased from the government.

Explosion in Russia kills 27 miners, leaves 35 missing

MOSCOW (AFP) — Twenty-seven miners were killed and 35 missing after a methane gas explosion in a pit at Kemerovo in western Siberia, ITAR-TASS news agencies reported early Tuesday, quoting the ministry for emergencies.

A total of 67 people were reported to have been in the mine at the time of the blast. Five survived with injuries, while rescue workers were looking for the remainder.

Regional Governor Aman Tulev had gone to the scene and three days of mourning were declared in the region, reports said.

The three-judge panel, in a written ruling, convicted the entire 23-member directorate of the radical separatist party of collaborating with the guerrillas.

Herri Batasuna, a legal party which holds considerable sway with Basque voters, immediately condemned the verdict as "barbaric" and called for a one-day general strike on Dec. 15 throughout the autonomous Basque region as a show of protest.

Herri Batasuna spokesman Floren Aniz warned of "serious direct consequences," and the party's attorneys vowed to appeal to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

But Interior Minister Jaime Mayor Oreja, echoing the reaction of most mainstream Spanish politicians, welcomed the court's decision, saying the "rule of law" had prevailed.

Government officials said security forces were on alert for the possibility of violent retaliation by ETA, which has killed more than 800 people in its nearly 30-year struggle for an independent Basque state.

The verdict marked a major victory for Spain's centre-right government, which has branded Herri Batasuna "accomplices" to terrorism. But analysts warned that the stiff sentences could backfire by further radicalising the separatist movement and dashing hopes for a peace-

Basque radicals sentenced to 7 years

MADRID (R) — Spain's supreme court Monday sentenced the leaders of Herri Batasuna, the political wing of the Basque guerrilla group ETA, to seven years each in prison for showing a video of armed rebels in an election broadcast.

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ful dialogue. Spanish state radio reported that the politicians have been given 48 hours to put their affairs in order before they were taken into custody to begin serving their sentences.

Surrounded by television cameras, a court official, flanked by two masked Basque policemen, was dispatched to Herri Batasuna's headquarters in the separatist stronghold of Bilbao to personally notify the defendants.

The court ruled that Herri Batasuna had illegally spread propaganda for ETA when it used its air time in last year's general election to broadcast a rebel video showing masked and armed guerrillas.

Defence attorneys contended the video was meant to publicise an ETA peace proposal, not to justify violence. But prosecutors said it was proof of direct involvement with the rebels.

Herri Batasuna, which means "popular unity" in the Basque language, is a legal political party. Its relationship to ETA, which stands for Basque homeland and freedom, has been equated to Sinn Féin's ties to the Irish Republican Army.

The supreme court justices condemned the defendants as "the authors of a crime of collaboration with an armed band."

But the judges acquitted them of two other serious charges — that they actually belonged to the rebel organisation and had acted in "defence of terrorism" when they made public statements in support of two ETA assassinations last year.

A "shadow" leadership has been named to run the party's day-to-day opera-

tions once the 23 members of the executive committee are imprisoned, newspapers have reported.

"We can all be satisfied ... because this has clearly demonstrated the connection between ETA and Herri Batasuna," said Ana Maria Vidal, president of the Association of Victims of Terrorism.

But Basque nationalists, who had criticised the prosecution of Herri Batasuna as a "show trial," said the verdict was unfair and politically motivated.

"This is barbaric from a judicial and political point of view," said Rafael Larrea, a spokesman for the Basque party Euzko Alkartasuna.

Legal experts said Spanish law required the defendants to serve at least four years of their seven-year sentences. The prosecution had asked for eight-year terms. They were also ordered to pay fines of 500,000 pesetas (\$3,500) each.

Most of the country's political parties had supported the decision to prosecute Herri Batasuna's leadership, but defence attorneys had accused the government of pressuring the judges to convict because of rising anti-ETA sentiment.

An estimated six million Spaniards took to the streets in protest in July after ETA kidnapped and killed Basque town councillor Miguel Angel Blanco.

Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar responded by pledging to crack down on ETA and isolate Herri Batasuna, which had refused to condemn Blanco's assassination. The party won 15 per cent of the vote in the last regional election and has two representatives in the national parliament.

Papers pay libel damages for Versace mafia allegations

LONDON (AFP) — The late Gianni Versace's fashion empire Monday accepted substantial undisclosed libel damages over British newspaper allegations that the company was involved with the mafia.

The action followed articles in the Observer and Independent newspapers in July shortly after the 50-year-old designer was shot dead outside his Miami mansion.

Lawyers for Versace, his brother Santo and sister Donatella Versace said the family had brought the case over an Observer article — entitled "Mafia black hand put Versace in fear of his life" — to show that any such allegation was untrue and to clear their name.

Guardian Newspapers Ltd, which owns the Observer, and Newspaper Publishing Plc, owners of the Independent, apologised for any suggestion that there had been mafia infiltration into or money laundering within the Versace companies.

The newspapers had agreed to pay substantial damages and costs as a mark of their regret, lawyers said.



Congress President Sitaram Keshri reports outside Rashtrapati Bhawan with Indian President K.R. Narayanan

Elections as alliance

NEW DELHI (R) — India's ruling Congress party was facing a second round of elections in 18 months as the main political force in the country, the Congress party, was expected to form a government.

There was no word on whether the Congress party would make its own government or join a coalition.

The Congress party, which had been in power for 13 years, was expected to form a coalition with other parties to win a majority in the 545-member Lok Sabha.

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Montserrat volcano crisis to last years

OLVESTON, Montserrat (R) — Emergency officials said Monday they did not now plan a full evacuation of Montserrat, in spite of a report predicting it could be decades before all of the volcano-plagued British territory is safe.

"Volcanic activity will probably continue for at least a few more years," the Montserrat Emergency Department said in its daily update on the Caribbean island's troublesome Soufriere hills volcano.

"It will be years, perhaps decades, before the south of Montserrat is safe enough to be redeveloped and rehoused," the department said, quoting a

recent report by the British Parliament's International Development Committee.

Montserrat has lost some two-thirds of its population since its volcano roared to life in July 1995 after centuries of virtual dormancy, forcing the evacuation of the southern portion of the island, including its capital Plymouth.

There are fewer than 4,000 people left on Montserrat, versus about 11,000 before the volcano came to life, Franklin Michael, permanent secretary of the island's Emergency Department, told Reuters.

Those remaining on Montserrat are confined to

a "safe" zone comprising the northern third of the island. "As of now, as far as I am aware at my level, there is no specific imminent decision for a full, off-island evacuation," Mr. Michael said.

The report said there was virtually no risk that the Soufriere hills volcano would suffer a "Krakatoa-like" eruption. But it said there were possible explosive events falling short of such a cataclysm that could have catastrophic effects on the small island.

"The probability of explosive events affecting the north and causing serious injury is between 1 in 30 and 1 in 300. This probability is significant enough to be taken into

account in any planning of the future of the north of Montserrat," the report said.

The report also noted health risks of heavy ash falls on the island as a result of the volcano's activity.

The volcano on the Indonesian island of Krakatoa erupted in August 1883. More than 40,000 people died on and off the island from pyroclastic flows of ultra-hot rock and gas, the volcano's collapse into the sea and gigantic tidal waves connected with the eruption.

Those tidal waves were so powerful that they eventually reached Britain.



Congress President S. Narayana (left) and party leader Arjun Singh (right) speak to reporters outside Rashtrapati Bhavan (presidential palace) moments after meeting with Indian President K.R. Narayana in New Delhi (AFP photo)

Elections loom in India as alliance efforts stall

NEW DELHI (R) — India Tuesday was lurching towards its second national election in 18 months as efforts by the main political parties to cobble together enough support to form a government appeared to have stalled.

There was no word on when President K.R. Narayana would make his decision on whether to dissolve parliament and call an election or ask either the Congress Party or the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to try and rule.

Leaders of Congress, which toppled the centre-left United Front coalition last week by ending its support, met the head of state Monday to plead its case for a claim to power.

Seeking to poach enough deputies from the 15-party United Front to form a government, Congress argued that it was the only group not to have been given a chance to rule since elections threw up a fragmented parliament 18 months ago.

But United Front leaders also met Mr. Narayana, telling him they would stand united — and so a poll was the only option.

"The United Front stands united. There cannot be any defection from us," Harkrishan Singh Surjeet, leader of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), told reporters.

The BJP also has been hoping for mass defections from Congress. But there were no signs that Congress, which ruled India for all but five of its 50 years of independence, was about to split, despite its internal wranglings.

The BJP is the largest party in the 545-member Lower House of Parliament, but with 162 seats it is far short of a majority. Congress has 138 members and the United Front 178.

"With arithmetics remaining steadfastly uncooperative, President Narayana's efforts to install an alternative government... seem to be running out of options," the Hindustan Times said in an editorial.

The political uncertainty fuelled another attack on the rupee, which fell to an all-time low of 39.30/40 to the U.S. dollar in early trading Tuesday.

Finance Secretary Montek Singh Ahluwalia said Monday he was "not rattled" by the fall of the rupee, which is

largely due to a scarcity of dollar inflows following the Asian markets crisis and a halt in foreign borrowing by Indian firms.

However, Indian authorities have been taking steps to beat back speculators and the Central Bank said it would announce a package of measures soon.

The currency crisis has coincided with a slowdown in the economy after several years of reform-driven growth.

The political disarray has raised doubt among business leaders and foreign investors about the pace and scope of further reform. Many complain that while political parties manoeuvre for power, few are talking about their agenda.

"All parties are trying their best to buy or browbeat the maximum number of MPs to their side so that they can try and stake claim to form the government," the Times of India said.

"What is missing, however, is any discussion about what they intend to do once they come to power. There is not even a pretence of standing for a different set of economic or social policies."

AIDS epidemic washes up against Europe's old Iron Curtain

COPENHAGEN (AFP) — The old dividing line of Europe's Iron Curtain has taken on grim new significance, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO) — with countries to the East ravaged by a spiralling number of AIDS cases.

"Eastern Europe is now in the forefront of the AIDS epidemic," WHO's regional head of Europe, Doctor Jo Asvall, said Monday in a statement from the organisation's headquarters in Copenhagen to coincide with the 11th annual World AIDS Day.

"The very rapid rise of new cases of HIV infection in the newly-independent states of the former USSR demands urgent attention," he said.

While Western Europe has seen a 10 per cent drop in the number of people suffering Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, Eastern Europe's cases in 1997 were double that of all previous years — adding an estimated 100,000 new

cases, the statement said. The dramatic upsurge is largely blamed on needle-sharing by drug users.

Seventy per cent of Ukrainian drug addicts are testing positive to the disease, WHO said. Of the 25,000 people there carrying the precursor to AIDS, Human Immune-deficiency Virus (HIV), half of them were registered in 1997.

Russian authorities estimate that there are 350,000 regular drug-users on its territory and that most of them share syringes.

WHO also expressed concern at widespread unsafe sexual practices.

A rate of syphilis infections in Belarus, Moldavia and Russia 100 times higher than in Western Europe is an alarming indication of the non-use of condoms, the statement indicated.

"Increasing poverty, mobility, injecting drug use and changing lifestyles have left the newly-independent states more vulnerable to the spread of HIV," said Professor Sieghart

Dittman, the coordinator for WHO's European Programme Of Communicable Diseases.

Radical changes to the economy and political structure diverted attention and money from the AIDS threat in former Soviet territories, he said.

"Our challenge now is to bridge the growing gap between the Eastern and Western parts of Europe, and to do it quickly."

Romania is a particularly cruel example of Eastern Europe's AIDS woes.

The 4,226 children infected with the disease there represent more than half of all of Europe's children suffering AIDS.

The health ministry says most, some 63 per cent, contracted HIV through blood transfusions or by the use of unsterilised needles.

More than 1,500 Romanian children have died of AIDS since 1990, prompting a group of demonstrators Monday to lay sheets bearing the names of the dead on a sidewalk in cen-

tral Bucharest in a public call for government intervention.

Monica Dan, one of the organisers, explained: "The authorities do nothing in terms of prevention and the cases of contaminated children are still climbing this year."

That is also a concern for infected adults. The number of HIV-positive adult Romanians climbed 25 per cent this year, with 473 new cases registered by the Health Ministry.

In Poland, where officials prepared to hold an international conference on ways to fight AIDS, 5,000 AIDS cases have been noted since 1985. This year up to October, 581 new cases were diagnosed and 345 died of AIDS.

The number of HIV-carriers in Poland is estimated at between 15,000 and 20,000.

In Yugoslavia, which counts 671 AIDS cases of which 465 have died and 10,000 HIV cases, youths distributed brochures and

condoms to passers-by in Belgrade.

New triple-drug treatments that only became available in Western countries last year have been attributed to a cut in the number of AIDS cases in those countries, often by around 30 per cent.

That, along with more vigorous public campaigns started years earlier, are seen as the reasons why Western Europe is showing a radically different result in the face of AIDS.

In Austria, for instance, only six AIDS deaths were reported this year, against 72 in 1995, according to the "AIDS Hilfe" assistance organisation. The country has between 12,000 and 16,000 HIV cases.

In total, the United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) said last week that 30 million people in the world have HIV, and there are 16,000 new infections every day — a situation it termed "far worse than previously thought."

Find ways to prevent AIDS in kids, Clinton says

WASHINGTON (R) — President Clinton Monday ordered all federal agencies to find new ways to prevent the spread of AIDS among children.

In a declaration marking World AIDS Day, Mr. Clinton noted that AIDS was the sixth leading cause of death among people aged 15 to 24, and the biggest cause of death of young black Americans in the same age group.

"The loss of so many young Americans to this terrible epidemic is a threat to this nation and should serve as a call to action," Mr. Clinton said in the statement.

"Accordingly I hereby direct that each federal agency, within 90 days, working with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the office on national AIDS policy, identify all pro-

grammes under its control that serve young people aged 13 to 21 and offer a significant opportunity for preventing HIV infection," Mr. Clinton said.

He gave the agencies six months to come up with a plan for ways each programme could increase access to HIV educational information, as well as support for people with the HIV virus that can develop into AIDS.

"The statistics are heart-breaking," Mr. Clinton said in a separate statement. "In America alone, more than 7,500 children under the age of 13 have been diagnosed with AIDS. Every hour of every day, two more Americans under the age of 21 become infected with HIV."

Earlier, first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton joined forces with AIDS campaigners and movie stars to

urge that AIDS drugs be tested on children and be made more widely available to them.

They said 25 per cent of all new HIV infections in the United States were in people under age 20, and that up to 10 million children around the world would be infected over the next three years.

"AIDS hits children especially hard and children with the virus have fewer treatment options than adults," Mrs. Clinton told supporters of the Elizabeth Glaser Paediatrics AIDS Foundation, which gave her an award to mark World AIDS Day.

"We particularly have to remain concerned because some of the latest drugs available to adults are not available to children," Mrs. Clinton added.

In August, President Clinton proposed new

Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations that would force drug companies to study the effects of all drugs in children.

The American academy of paediatrics says 80 per cent of drugs sold in the United States carry no instructions on how to use them in children. Only 42 per cent of the drugs most commonly used by children and adolescents have been tested on them. There are 11 drugs currently available to treat AIDS, but only six of them are approved for children and have special formulations for children.

Use of the drug AZT has prevented many cases of mother-to-baby transmission of HIV, but researchers at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said many more mothers were becoming infected and

wiping out such progress.

"Between 1991 and 1995, the number of women diagnosed with AIDS increased by over 60 per cent, more than any other group reported with AIDS regardless of race or mode of transmission," Dr. Mary Lou Lindegren of the CDC's AIDS surveillance branch told a forum marking World AIDS Day.

In New York, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said AIDS was the most publicised disease in the world "but its impact on children has received an inadequate response and AIDS programmes for children have lagged behind those of adults."

Mr. Annan said that by the end of 1997, 1 million children under the age of 15 were expected to be living with HIV, the vast majority of them in developing countries.

Colombia's Samper vows crackdown on death squads

BOGOTA (R) — President Ernesto Samper vowed Monday to crack down on Colombia's right-wing death squads, saying they would be chased "all the way to hell" if need be to bring an end to the violence against suspected rebel sympathisers.

"These private justice groups, wrongly called paramilitaries, are taking reprisals against innocent and unarmed people to settle supposed scores with guerrillas who they never confront," Mr. Samper said in a national radio and television address.

"We will give no quarter in fighting these groups of demented killers," he added, saying, "we will pursue them all the way to hell, if necessary, I promise it."

Mr. Samper spoke after an emergency meeting of his security council earlier Monday, called to discuss four peasant massacres over the previous 11 days in which nearly 50 people were tortured and killed.

His speech also came a day after a group of human rights experts from the Organisation of American States arrived in Colombia to voice what a spokesman described Monday as its "deep concern about the acts of violence linked to the paramilitary or private justice groups" bleeding the Colombian countryside.

Human rights groups have charged repeatedly that the paramilitaries — which have been killing with impunity for years —

work with the tacit or open support of Colombia's army commanders.

But Samper, whose weak central government has proved powerless to stop a growing spiral of violence involving Marxist rebels and right-wing gunmen, said he had ordered the military and police to fight "all armed groups without distinction."

A special task force, similar to the one formed to track down members of the Cali drug cartel in 1995, would be formed to locate and arrest the heads of paramilitary groups, he said.

He also vowed that "wanted" ads would be posted nationwide offering bounties for anyone who provides information leading to the arrest of leaders of groups like the so-called peasant Self-defence Force of Cordoba and Uraba (ACCU), the country's largest paramilitary group.

Carlos Castano, the ACCU's commander and a virulent anti-Communist, has had a \$1 million price on his head for the past year. But he has still managed to give press interviews and meet congressmen and other politicians, including Mr. Samper's own peace emissaries, in his stronghold in northwest Cordoba province.

Seeking to bar further contacts with death squad leaders, Mr. Samper said anyone who met with them in the future would be hit with unspecified "legal sanctions."

FBI chief urges Clinton, Gore independent counsel

WASHINGTON (R) — FBI Director Louis Freeh put in writing his views that Attorney General Janet Reno should seek an independent counsel to investigate fund raising by President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore, federal law enforcement officials said Monday.

As Ms. Reno nears her decision Tuesday on whether to seek an independent counsel, the officials said Mr. Freeh first made his case for an outside counsel in a meeting with Ms. Reno a week ago, and then gave her his arguments in writing.

The move illustrated the differences between the FBI, which has long favoured turning the criminal probe over to an independent counsel, and Justice Department prosecutors on the task force now investigating the campaign finance allegations.

Mr. Freeh's view was at odds with the recommendation of the prosecutors, who have urged Ms. Reno not to seek the appointment of an outside counsel to probe phone calls made from the White House by Mr. Clinton and Mr. Gore during the 1994-96 time period.

Ms. Reno had the Freeh memo by the time she left on Nov. 25 for a brief trip to Mexico, the officials said.

Among the arguments made by Mr. Freeh was that ending the probe into the phone calls would hamper the investigation into whether there might have been a broad conspiracy to violate campaign laws, the officials said.

A senior Justice Department official, asked about

Mr. Freeh's move, would only say, he has made his views known.

Mr. Freeh's support for an independent counsel already has provided ammunition for Republicans in Congress.

When you have a squabble between the attorney general and the head of the FBI, you know damn well that there's a reason to appoint an independent counsel and to get rid of the conflict of interest," Sen. Orrin Hatch, Republican from Utah, said Sunday.

Asked after a Justice Department ceremony commemorating World AIDS Day if she had made any decision yet, Ms. Reno told reporters: "No, not yet."

Asked if Tuesday would be the day, she replied: "I think it probably will be." Under the independent counsel law, Tuesday represents the last possible day for Ms. Reno to decide.

A senior Justice Department official later said there would be no announcement Monday. Another official said Ms. Reno and her advisers always have waited until the deadline in nearly all past independent counsel decisions.

Department officials and Republicans in Congress expect Ms. Reno to decide against an independent counsel for the Clinton-Gore phone calls.

Department officials said Ms. Reno also will not seek an independent counsel to investigate allegations by Democratic fund-raiser Johnny Chung that he was solicited for a \$25,000 bribe in return for a 1995 meeting with then-Energy Secretary

Hazel O'Leary and Chinese executives.

Asked at the start of a White House meeting with his budget advisers whether he had been informed of whether Ms. Reno had made her decision, Mr. Clinton replied with a curt, "no."

Mr. Clinton was scheduled Monday night to attend two political fund-raising events, one for the Democratic Party and the other one for the Democratic Senate Campaign Committee.

White House spokesman Mike McCurry rejected suggestions that it might appear odd for Mr. Clinton to go to the fund-raisers as Ms. Reno nears her decision.

"Wake up and see reality. Reality is that campaign spending is running somewhat out of control and that Republicans are outspending Democrats five to one. So just get used to it, because the president is going to have to do a lot more of it unless we secure campaign finance reform," he said.

Canada sees momentum on landmine ban

OTTAWA (R) — Canadian Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy, clearly exhilarated by momentum building on the eve of an international conference on banning landmines, said Monday as many as 120 nations might sign the treaty this week.

"We could have maybe 120 sign," Mr. Axworthy said in an interview with reporters ahead of the three-day conference opening Tuesday. "These are very satisfactory results."

Just 14 months ago, no one had suggested a signing conference at the end of 1997 and no text was written.

At this point, however, dignitaries from about two-thirds of the world's nations are on the way to Ottawa to sign the document. Other important nations — including Russia and the United States — have pledged not to export the deadly weapons.

As many as 155 nations are expected, some as observers.

Mr. Axworthy, who along with Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien made

the ban one of the government's top priorities in the last year, said he would try to use the momentum of the conference to move towards removing mines and rehabilitation of victims.

"Getting the treaty is one thing. Getting the mines out of the ground is a bigger thing," he said.

U.S. President Bill Clinton is seeking \$1 billion a year in world spending on mine removal. Mr. Axworthy said he would be happy to see pledges to spend \$500 million over the next several years coming out of the conference.

From Afghanistan to Cambodia, Angola to Bosnia, between 60 and 100 million mines still plague farmlands and forests, causing more than 25,000 casualties a year, most of them women and children, he said.

That means a blown-off leg or hand or a death every 22 minutes, Mr. Axworthy said.

This eats up precious resources in developing countries, he said. Twenty-five per cent of Angola's

health budget is devoted to treating victims.

One major target would be to develop detection technology so that people clearing mines do not have to poke gingerly ahead of them with a steel rod.

"You don't provide many pension plans for people in that occupation," according to Mr. Axworthy.

The purpose of the treaty was to limit the effects of war to only military forces, Mr. Axworthy said.

"You're barring those weapons that primarily affect civilians," he said. "Humanitarian reasons now have to outweigh military reasons."

The signing is to take place Wednesday and Thursday, while Tuesday's focus would be on mine removal and rehabilitation.

Earlier Monday, Mr. Axworthy and American Nobel Peace Prize winner Jody Williams, a veteran campaigner for the ban, celebrated amid the popping of champagne corks as a "ban bus" arrived after a six-week journey from San Francisco.

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Tightening the screws on Israel

THE LATEST press reports from Washington suggest that President Bill Clinton is about to issue Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu an "ultimatum" of sorts to get the peace process moving before the end of the year or face the consequences. The U.S. is fast losing patience with the defiant Israeli premier and wants obstacles resolved on the Palestinian-Israeli front soon. While it is not clear what the Clinton administration has in mind, speculation is rife that the U.S. might endorse the principle of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, has threatened to unilaterally declare an independent Palestinian state if Israel has not implemented signed accords by May 1999 and in return, Mr. Netanyahu has threatened to annex the West Bank should the Palestinians exercise that option. But such a threat is shallow because annexation of the Palestinian territories equates Iraq's annexation of Kuwait, which the entire world rejected and terminated in due course. Such a move would transfer Israel overnight into a binational state which neither the Israelis can demographically afford nor the Palestinians want. This explains U.S. exasperation with Israel and its various tactics and manoeuvres to mark time. Should President Clinton in fact move in this direction and start tightening the screws on Israel by all available means, 1998 may indeed witness a rapid movement on the Palestinian-Israeli front. The U.S. has strong leverages with the Jewish state and the minute it decides to apply even some of them, the peace process would acquire new dynamics that will surely make a success of the peace process altogether and afford the U.S. better standing in the region, where its double standard policies vis-a-vis Israel against all, will evidently have a toll on U.S. interests at large.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AI Doustour's Yasser Zaureh Tuesday called on UNICEF to launch a media campaign in the U.S., Britain and other Western countries to draw attention to the plight of Iraqi children suffering under the present sanctions. According to Zaureh, the United Nations Children's Fund will definitely find people in these nations sympathetic towards innocent children and ready to listen to reason and eventually pressure their governments to lift the embargo. The campaign should make it clear that Iraq has lost all means of making weapons of mass destruction, does not constitute any source of danger to its neighbours and is not, like Israel which is armed to the teeth, day and night threatening its neighbouring Arab states, said the writer. He said UNICEF's campaign should be able to tell the Western societies the truth about the situation because the Western media continues to propagate falsehoods about Iraq. The Western world should be told that the neighbours of Iraq are not afraid of their sister Arab country and are themselves demanding that the sanctions be lifted and no military strike be directed against Iraq, according to the writer. He said the Arabs should finance this UNICEF campaign and create pressure groups in any possible area to help achieve this objective.

AI Ra'i's Mahmoud Rimawi said there is no justification for the on-going hostile propaganda duel between Egypt and Qatar. If differences in view occurred over the convening of the Doha economic meeting, everybody realises that Egypt was not alone in boycotting the meeting because of Israel's presence there, noted the writer. He said if the hostile propaganda is being launched over Qatar's accusation that two Egyptians were involved in a coup attempt, the accusation is not levelled at Egypt as a state but rather at individual Egyptians. Noting that the feud started with accusations and counter-accusations by newspapers in Qatar and Egypt, the writer said that the wise men of the two countries and the statesmen and officials should have resorted to reason and should not have allowed themselves to be carried away by innuendoes created by the press. He said that it is really regrettable to see the two countries bickering over trivial matters, with harmful consequences to their political and economic relations. Only the wise in the two countries, he said, can bring this campaign to an end before it causes irreparable damage.

Washington Watch

Smear campaigns mar today's politics

By Dr. James Zogby

THE STORY alleging that the Clinton administration sold burial plots in Arlington National Cemetery surfaced, gained national prominence and was proven false last week.

How the story unfolded was a classic example of the way the right wing has been working during the past several years to plant stories to smear their enemies.

The pattern is a familiar one. A story is planted in the right-wing press, then faxed to the national network of right wing radio talk shows. After feeding the story to millions of listeners and agitating them to call their congressional representatives, some members of Congress react. All that is required is for one member of Congress to call for a formal investigation and the story becomes a national news item that must then be covered by the more respectable national newspapers and TV network news broadcasts.

At this point what began as a baseless allegation takes on a life of its own and becomes a major issue to which the White House must respond.

This is how the "burial plot" story unfolded last week.

On the first day, Insight Magazine, a right-wing publication, printed a story alleging that the Clinton White House sold burial plots at Arlington National Cemetery (the resting place of the nation's war veterans). According to the story, "dozens of big-time political donors and friends of the Clinton's" were given White House waivers to be buried at the cemetery. The story alleges that those who were given permission to be buried were "unqualified people." The story charged that such a practice was an "outrage" and said, "somebody over at the White House ought to be convicted for selling America's most sacred property."

The story, which presented no names or evidence to

prove the allegations, was faxed to talk radio shows across the United States. That same day and the following day, listeners were presented with the story as if it were true.

On the first day, a U.S. representative who also chairs the congressional committee that oversees the cemetery, announced that his committee would investigate the matter. On day two of the story, two prominent senators called for a Senate investigation as well. By now, the nation's mainstream press was reporting the story as yet another White House scandal, with senators calling for hearings and representatives threatening to subpoena evidence from the White House.

Right-wing columnists stepped up the rhetorical attack with some calling for the "end of this scandal-ridden administration."

Three days into the erupting scandal, the White House, outraged over the growing lie, released the names of all that had been buried in the cemetery, including those who had been given special waivers by the president.

Of the 58 names of those who had been given waivers by the secretary of the army, almost all were the wives of former military officers who were entitled to be buried next to their veteran husbands.

The four waivers that had been personally given by the president were for a supreme court justice, the wife of the chief justice of the supreme court, a Washington, D.C. police officer killed in the line of duty and a Drug Enforcement Agency officer killed on duty.

The story turned out to be no story at all — just a failed effort at a smear.

In many ways, this story is symptomatic of the problems facing the White House these days. There are currently 20 House and Senate committees investigating similarly baseless charges against the president and vice president.

The costs to the taxpayers have exceeded \$50 million — with no evidence of any actual laws being broken. But the allegations and investigations themselves persist and have come to occupy the time not only of the Congress in its relentless pursuit to damage the White House, but the White House itself which has been forced to spend significant energy and expense to respond to the many charges hurled against them.

Equally victimised in all of this has been the American public, whose confidence in its government has been damaged and who have become increasingly cynical in the face of these mostly political games.

My outrage to all of this is personal, since I can speak from experience at the effect that these smear campaigns can have.

Arab American and Muslim American leaders have been targets for many years of the same abusive efforts. Recently the very same right-wing press was working hard to discredit me and an Arab American nominated for an ambassadorial post by President Clinton. And just last week, a writer in a prominent Jewish newspaper attempted to malign me and demand that the White House no longer deal with me because of hostile views he maintained I hold.

In both cases, those threatening efforts to discredit failed. Despite attempts to engage the Senate in investigating baseless and false charges, the entire U.S. Senate confirmed the Arab American ambassadorial appointment. And Arab Americans continue to be defended and supported by the White House.

The smear campaigns have become normal practice in today's politics. They take a toll, and they are painful to endure. But they must be combated and won — because to surrender is to allow one's enemies to win.

Norway reopens Mossad case of mistaken identity

Almost a quarter of a century ago, Israel's intelligence agency killed a Moroccan waiter in Norway in the belief that he was a Palestinian leader. Now Norway wants Israel to interrogate the chief suspect.

By Patrick Cockburn in Jerusalem

THE CHIEF suspect, Mike Harari, was a Mossad veteran who went on to an inglorious career as army dealer in Latin America and confidant of General Noriega, the dictator of Panama.

It was in July 1973 that a team of Mossad agents arrived in the town of Lillehammer in Norway, believing they had finally tracked down Ali Hassan Salameh, the "Red Prince," whom Israel held responsible for planning the killing of 11 Israeli athletes in Munich a year earlier.

The gunmen followed the supposed Palestinian leader around Lillehammer for several hours on July 21 and then shot him dead in front of a pregnant woman as he returned home from a film. Only later did they learn that the dead man was, in fact, a Moroccan waiter called Ahmad Bouchiki, and the woman was his Norwegian wife.

The leader of the assassination squad was Mike Harari, according to Israeli books on the attack, now aged 70 and living in Tel Aviv. Norway reopened the investigation into the Bouchiki's death in October. They made little effort at the time to locate Mr. Harari, who went on

to enjoy a lucrative career as an arms dealer.

Why it has taken Norway so long to act is unclear. The Mossad operation was the most disastrous in the organisation's history until September this year, when two of its men were arrested in Jordan as they tried to assassinate Khalid Misha'al, an official of the Hamas movement.

Two of those involved in killing Bouchiki in Lillehammer had rented cars under their own names, Dan Ert and Marianne Gladnikoff. They were arrested when they returned them at Oslo airport. Once they had provided the address of a flat used by Mossad, six other agents were arrested. Mr. Ert turned out to suffer from claustrophobia and confessed everything to the Norwegian police in return for a larger cell.

The Israeli government paid compensation to the Bouchiki family two years ago, but without admitting responsibility for the killing. Five of the Mossad agents served short terms in prison and were pardoned. Mr. Harari and his fellow agent and girlfriend were almost alone in escaping. Another of the Mossad agents married her Norwegian lawyer. Mr. Harari later sold Israeli arms worth about \$500 million to Latin America in the 1980s.

Now, seeing the statute of limitations running out, the Norwegian police have decided they would like Israel to ask him about what happened in Lillehammer in 1973.

The Independent

The post-cold war Public relations vs national interests

By Dr. Jamil A. Shurdom

IF THE Gulf War and the Cold War's end have taught the nations a lesson, it is this: the post Cold War era in the last decade of the 1990's heralds an approaching century of economic and political competition among nations.

This is a critical time in history. Relations among nations are no longer based on ideological confrontations, military balance and superiority. Wars have proven to be invalid tools to advance national causes and interests.

Indeed, the Age of the Cold War is over. The economic Cold War has begun. Technological advances and the desperate needs of the industrial world in the Third World countries' national resources have created a new world order. With the advent and widespread use of multiple forms of media, the world can watch events, and make judgments, as they occur.

What this means to the community of nations in presenting a public image is more critical now than ever. Countries must design and implement programmes to project desired images throughout the world. Today, media and public relations effects are the backbone of

any nation's image in the eyes of the U.S. and the international community at large.

Information centers, intensive public relations efforts and established spheres of influence with the media play a

supremely important role in the media's perspective in a nation and on the understanding of that nation by peoples around the world. A solid, positive public image is vital to any nation's pursuit of its national interests within the world's arena. Enlightening the media and promoting a country's image requires a strong and coordinated public relations effort and one that focuses on the specific factors having greatest influence.

The age of economic, political and media — disinformation warfare has now begun in earnest. The peaceful competition among the industrial powers to control the world-wide national resources is the banner of today's acclaimed New World Order. To move in a positive direction in the economic competition (i.e., "war") among nations, a significant reduction of military defence budgets is vital. The end is far better served by replacing military spending with an increased budget for public relations and image building (i.e.,

Israel, Japan, Kuwait).

In this 21st century, comprehensive information processing is the best investment for achieving a country's political and national interests. The country who can successfully propagandise its interests within the U.S. and the industrial world's public opinion consciousness will be the country that best survives politically and economically.

The ability to properly and efficiently present "a nation's side of the story" is greatly determined by the budget allocated for implementing such a strategy. With these observations, we are moved to suggest that it would be in the best interest of any nation to establish without delay a well-funded information centre to positively advance the nation's stature in the forum of the United States (lobbying and participation in the political process of elections and reelections and creating spheres of influence within the decision-making process. It is the most advantageous strategy for less fortunate nations to pursue.

The writer is a professor of political science residing in the U.S. He contributed this article to the Jordan Times.

Netanyahu gets taste of his own medicine

By G.H. Jansen

IN WHAT may be called a stroke of "poetic justice" Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is presently being given a taste of his own medicine. He is having to accept and endure the sort of treatment that he and his followers meted out to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who was assassinated in 1995 by a Jewish fanatic incited to hatred and violence by a campaign of vilification which Netanyahu tried to exploit although no one accused him of direct implication in the murder.

Nevertheless, like an avenging angel, Leah Rabin, the widow of the slain prime minister, has said repeatedly that she will not, cannot and should not forgive "Bibi" Netanyahu for stirring up the climate of verbal violence which led to Rabin's death. What "Bibi" did was to incite the right-wing public against the peace process, making the assassination of Rabin, the author of this process, likely, possible and, in the end, inevitable.

That sort of hateful incitement is now once again manifesting itself in the statements of right-wing politicians and in posters being hung in the streets of Israel's cities and towns. Among those posters previously put up on the walls were some accusing Rabin of being a "traitor," others depicting him in Nazi uniform or wearing an Arab headdress, the black-and-white checked "kuffiyah," popularised by Palestine President Yasser Arafat. Last week posters of Netanyahu wearing the Arab kuffiyah were stuck on the walls of Jerusalem. These posters accused him of being a "liar."

Thus, Bibi has now been hoist on his own petard. Besides putting up the "liar" posters right-wingers are being encouraged to do what others did to Rabin — to demonstrate

noisily and in numbers in front of Netanyahu's private residence (according to Leah Rabin the angry shouting in front of her house in Tel Aviv went on day and night. But things are not quite as bad for Netanyahu because he is still recognised as the right's man and that he will do his best for that sector of society).

Bibi is, politically, in a weaker position than was Rabin, however. For it is members of Bibi's own Likud Party and his coalition partners who have him in a cleft stick. Likud right-wingers are threatening to leave the party and bring down the prime minister, if Bibi makes any territorial concessions to the Palestinians. This is true also of the prime minister's coalition partners from the religious parties. Meanwhile Likud centrists are threatening to do the very same thing for exactly the opposite reason — if Bibi does not make large enough territorial concessions to the Palestinians to restore credibility and forward movement to the peace process.

The U.S. also wants Bibi to do what his own centrists insist he must do. Thus, Bibi is in the position of being damned if he does and damned if he does not.

In fact, the Clinton administration is so angry with Bibi because of his refusal to implement the Oslo accords with the Palestinians that, in a major reversal of U.S. practice towards Israeli leaders, President Bill Clinton is publicly refusing to meet with Netanyahu. Thus, during his recent visit to the States, the two men did not meet, not even when, at one point, their private aircraft were parked side-by-side a few hundred metres apart on the tarmac at the airport at Los Angeles.

A snubbed and furious Netanyahu complained bitterly that "the entire Jewish state" has been "shamed" by what Clinton had done. Or rather by what the president had not done. In fact, Bibi, after Clinton's third refusal to grant him an interview,

asked the prime ministerial entourage to stop asking for an appointment because the refusals were so humiliating.

These refusals represent nothing short of a profound and indeed cataclysmic change, from the Israeli point of view, in the U.S. attitude towards Israel. It would seem to indicate that Israel no longer totally dominates the U.S. administration, not even this administration which is the most pro-Israel even. This is important because that domination has been a major factor in the relationship between the superpower and its Israeli strategic ally for a generation.

The reason for this seismic change is said to be Clinton's fury over Bibi's refusal to honour Israel's commitments to the Palestinians. Arab hostility to the Netanyahu government and anger with the U.S. for failing to compel Israel to meet its obligations, led all the Arab governments to refuse to back Washington in its ongoing confrontation with Iraq. Arab abandonment of the U.S.-led 1991 Gulf War coalition amounts to a power play of global proportions and significance.

Bibi has succeeded in alienating just about everybody...

Netanyahu's personal style — as well as his political behaviour — has alienated many people. Personally Bibi is not very likeable because of his — and his wife's — arrogance and his refusal to listen to good advice.

Bibi's style of administration has caused considerable consternation among his ministers and Likud colleagues. He depends and works through a few chosen favourites

who, it happens, are not favourites with anyone else, particularly with professional civil servants who must pick up the pieces when the premier's favourites make mistakes or worse. Among these favourites are David Bar Ilan, his communications manager, and Avigdor Lieberman, formerly head of the prime minister's office. Lieberman and his successor, Moshe Leon, are both under police investigation for fraud at present.

Bibi has succeeded in alienating just about everybody: even Israel's subservient supporters in the U.S. administration, the American Jewish community, the British government and the British Jewish community. During a recent visit to Britain only 75 couples out of 200 invited to a dinner in honour of the prime minister attended.

In addition to members of his own Likud Party, he has alienated the high command of the Israeli armed forces. Soldiers do not like being ordered about by civilians, like Bibi, who do not take the military's concerns into account when formulating policy. (The fact that Bibi has done his military service, like all Israeli adults, and in a command unit has not helped him in this respect.)

The major complaint of all his antagonists is, "We do not know whether we can trust him because he changes his mind and his policies so often."

Because Bibi runs office by a very narrow margin of votes and since he has a very narrow power base — the Likud holds only one quarter of the seats in the 120-member Knesset — there is a great deal of talk from many quarters of replacing him as prime minister and bringing down his Likud-led coalition. For Israeli centrists and Palestinians, the Clinton administration, Europe and the Arabs, this would be "a consummation devoutly to be desired" and realised.

By Dr. Chandra P. Gurung

AMMAN — One month after my arrival to Jordan, I visited Wadi Rum with a group of Japanese friends. The trip, organised by the Japanese School in Amman, impressed me immensely with the unparalleled beauty of God's creation.

I believe, Wadi Rum has a great potential to develop as an eco-tourism destination of a different kind that visitors will return from with an everlasting memory of this magnificent place on earth.

Although my visit was short as I have been working in conservation and tourism in the remotest part of the Himalayas for more than a decade or so, I observed similar patterns of development in Wadi Rum which we encountered in the past in the fragile Himalayas. These problems need to be addressed soon before it is too late.

Wadi Rum's natural beauty should be protected not only by our generation but also the future generations so that they can enjoy this land of unimaginable beauty.

Eco-tourism, in recent days, has become a catchy word in the travel and conservation world. The roots of eco-tourism are nature-based tourism, encouraging the travel of small groups of elite nature lovers to a relatively undisturbed natural area. However, eco-tourism means much more than simply nature-based tourism. It involves environmental, social, economic and human concerns.

Eco-tourism is responsible and sensitive tourism that has minimum impact to the ecology, social and cultural environments of the area visited while benefiting the local communities and conserving the ecology. In a sense, eco-tourism can play a role in developing a partnership between the public and private sectors as well as with the local communities and tourists in the conservation of nature and culture.

Since Wadi Rum was made known to the outside world, tourism to the area is constantly increasing. In 1992, for example, only 24,049 tourists visited Wadi Rum. By 1996, the number had reached 70,997, an increase of 195 per cent. In addition, there is also a growing number of tourists visiting Wadi Rum. For example, more than 65 per cent of tourists visit Wadi Rum during the months of March, May and September. In fact, the number of tourists who visited Wadi Rum did so much that it has become a major source of income for the local community. It is tourism growth in Wadi Rum, with high concentration during certain seasons, that will have tremendous impacts on the ecology, culture and economy. In such a situation, there are already visible problems. For example, there is no proper vehicle driving on the tracks of these vehicles where they go. There is littering of non-biodegradable items such as plastic bottles, particularly at Wadi Rum village, the main campsite of Wadi Rum. There seems to be no control of rock climbing. During our trip to

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Wadi Rum provides a unique opportunity for sustainable ecotourism, says expert

By Dr. Chandra P. Gurung

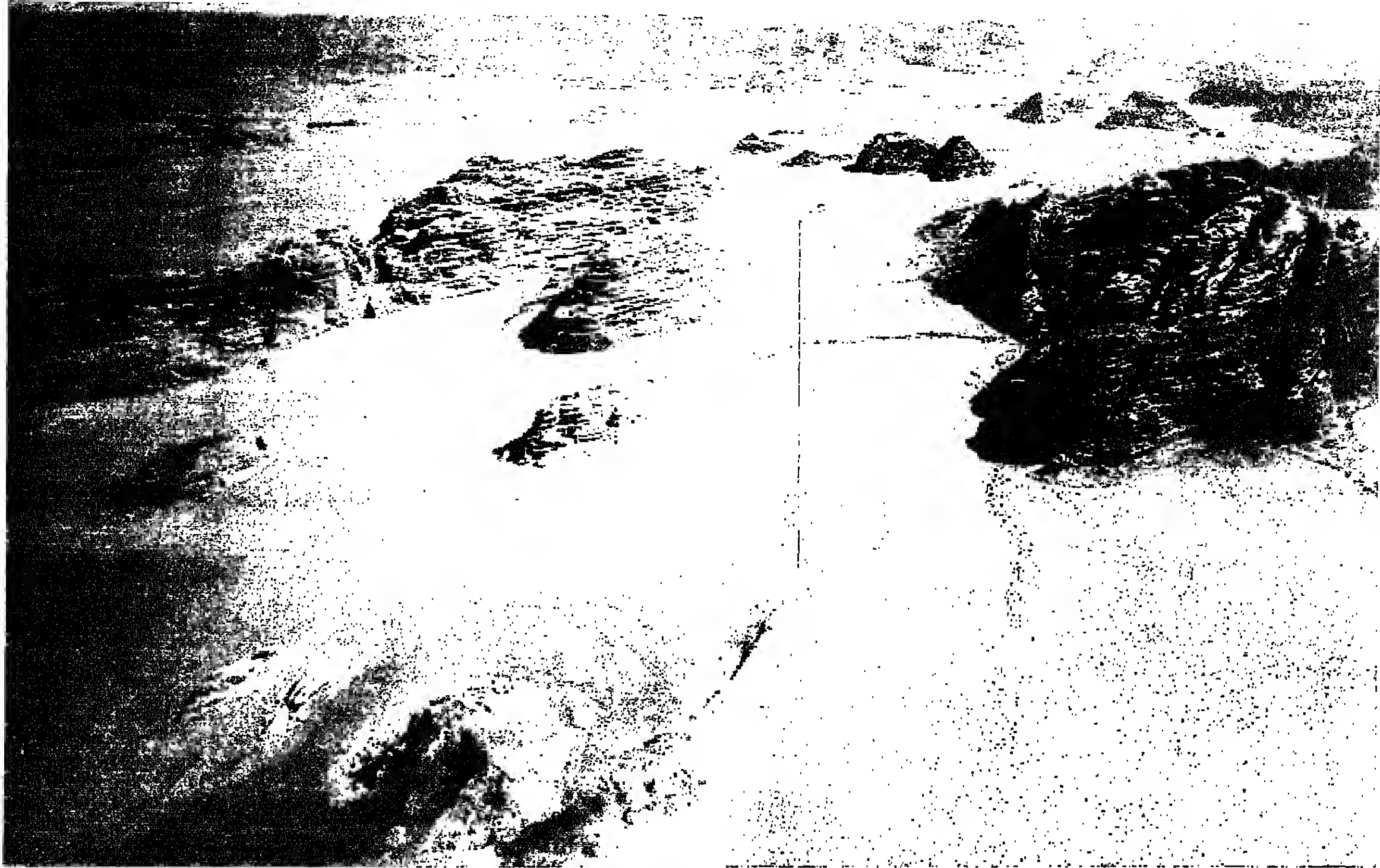
AMMAN — One month after my arrival to Jordan, I visited Wadi Rum with a group of Japanese friends. The trip, organized by the Japanese School in Amman, impressed me immensely with the unparalleled beauty of God's creation.

I believe, Wadi Rum has a great potential to develop as an ecotourism destination of a different kind that visitors will return from with an everlasting memory of this magnificent place on earth. Although my visit was short as I have been working in conservation and ecotourism in the remotest part of the Nepalese Himalayas for more than a decade or so. I observed similar patterns of development in Wadi Rum which we encountered in the past in the fragile Himalayas. These problems need to be addressed soon before it is too late. Wadi Rum's natural beauties should be protected not only by our generation but also the future generations so that they can enjoy this land of unimaginable beauty.

Ecotourism, in recent days, has become a catchy word in the travel and conservation world. The roots of ecotourism are nature-based tourism, encouraging the travel of small groups of elite nature lovers to a relatively undisturbed natural area. However, ecotourism means much more than simply nature-based tourism. It involves environmental, social, economic and human concerns.

Ecotourism is responsible and sensitive tourism, that has minimum impact to the ecology, social and cultural environments of the area visited while benefiting the local communities and conserving the ecology. In a sense, ecotourism can play a role in developing a partnership between the public and private sectors as well as with the local communities and tourists in the conservation of nature and culture.

Since Wadi Rum was made known to the outside world, tourism to the area is constantly increasing. In 1992, for example, only 24,049 visited Wadi Rum. By 1996, the number had reached 70,997, an increase of 195 per cent. In addition, there is also seasonality of tourists visiting Wadi Rum. For example, more than 65 per cent of tourists visit Wadi Rum during the following six months: March-May and September-November. In fact, in 1996, 45 per cent of the tourists who visited Wadi Rum did so between March and May. If tourism growth continues this way in Wadi Rum, with high concentration during certain seasons, it will have tremendous impacts on the ecology, culture and economy. In fact, problems are already visible. For example, there is no control of four-wheel drive vehicles driving within Wadi Rum. One can easily see the tracks of these vehicles wherever you go. There is littering of non-biodegradable items such as plastics and bottles, particularly at Rum village, the gateway to Wadi Rum. There seems to be no control of rock climbing. During our trip to



Vast deserts of undulating sands and the eerie, wind-sculpted mountains of Wadi Rum

Wadi Rum, we climbed Rock Bridge. A local bedouin guide was hired. It was obvious he was not trained at all, thus he was not fully prepared to handle the diverse members of our team. Many of our team were school children and were not properly dressed for climbing. Some of the places were frightening and dangerous. We were fortunate that some of the members in our group had already climbed Rock Bridge several times before. Thus, they were prepared with a long rope to use when necessary. After reaching the top, it was disheartening to see the graffiti everywhere, defacing such magnificent beauties. Although we were able to see some scats and footprints of wildlife, we did not see any wildlife at all. It could be because the four-wheel drive vehicles roam around everywhere destroying the fragile habitats of some of these desert animals and plants. In addition to it, the military helicopters hovering around Wadi Rum also do not help.

At present, there is not much of a litter and pollution problem in Wadi Rum, but they are certain to arise if proper measures are not taken as growth in the number of tourists to the area comes at a much faster rate.

Some Initiatives

After the visit of His Majesty King Hussein and King Juan Carlos of Spain in 1994, a number of government and non-governmental agencies began taking some initiatives to protect Wadi Rum and to improve the living conditions of its local communities. During the visit, King Hussein issued a directive to improve the conditions of vehicles owned by the local people as they were old and dangerous.

Followed by the visit of Their Majesties, a Spanish NGO donated to Jordan 21 four-wheel drive vehicles. The Queen Alia Fund for Social Development (QAF) took the initiative and developed an ecotourism project, particularly utilizing these vehicles. Part of the income from these vehicles is put back into Wadi Rum to improve the living conditions of the local residents. A kindergarten was opened at Rum village which has enrolled 40 children at present. As I was told by the QAF representative, it took them one-year-and-half to negotiate with the local people to implement their project as there was resistance from the local communities. Under the directives of HRH Princess Basma, an 11-member Ecotourism Project Committee including seven persons from local communities, has been constituted to supervise the project activities. It is planned that by the year 2000, QAF will provide 75 per cent of the income to the local communities for community development.

The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) will also be working in the area to protect the ecology of the core area of Wadi Rum. For example, at a meeting with RSCN President Anis Mousher, he indicated that he is already looking into ways to reduce the impact of four-wheel drive vehicles, possibly with the introduction of new kinds of tyres that will have less impact on the desert ecology.

The government has also formed a high level committee under the chairmanship of Dr. Fayed Khasawneh for the development and improvement of Wadi Rum. According to the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, the World Bank is funding the

tourism development project for Wadi Rum. Under this project, the infrastructure of the existing Rum village will be upgraded, a new visitors centre will be constructed and a new village will be planned for development near the visitors centre to accommodate future growth and the needs of residents who want to accommodate commercially related activities within the existing village. In addition, the project will include development of protected areas and tourism management systems and supporting the establishment and income-generating activities for the local population.

The local bedouin community has also set up a cooperative to manage the tourism in Wadi Rum.

Once there is a potential for tourism, private entrepreneurs will want to move into the area. There is already talk that hotels will be built with helicopters bringing tourists directly on top of the mountains. Balloon trips have also been considered.

Constraints

One of the major constraints for Wadi Rum's conservation is lack of coordination and communication among the various stakeholders who are active in the area. There seems to be little communication and coordination among those various agencies as well as the local people regarding how to develop and conserve Wadi Rum. Within Wadi Rum there are several villages with a total population ranging between eight to 10,000 people. They are the permanent inhabitants who know the area well. They are part of the whole ecosystem. My own experience from the Nepalese Himalayas is that no matter how beautiful a plan may be, unless local communities' needs are addressed, they will be less inclined to protect the environment, particularly if they see the benefits from tourism are received only by outsiders. At the same time, since the local people have started collecting entry fees, JD5 per vehicle and

JD1 per visitor, which totals hundreds of thousands of dinars annually, the problem is further complicated. How is that income to be shared by all the communities and government will become a significant problem. Therefore, protracted negotiations with the communities become vital.

Suggestions for ecotourism development in Wadi Rum

Based on my own experience working in ecotourism and conservation, the following suggestions are proposed if tourism in Wadi Rum is to be sustained:

1. Four wheel vehicles in the areas must be regulated so that they do not destroy the fragile environment and cause degradation to rare plants and animals, and to the soil.
2. Alternative sources of energy must be provided in order to reduce dependency on firewood. It appears that some of the local communities in Wadi Rum still use firewood for cooking. For example, since liquefied

gas is easily transported, it should be made available either by opening a depot or at nearby stores.

3. Waste and litter management must be given top priority. Some mechanism of recycling or disposal system must be developed before the problem gets out of hand.
4. A brochure of Wadi Rum should be prepared detailing the ecology, culture and history of the region.
5. Local residents should be given proper training as guides. The training courses should contain basic information on local ecology, socio-cultural environments of the bedouin tribes, and first aid skills.
6. Appropriate income-generating training to the local residents should be provided. The communities must feel that they are part of the whole Wadi Rum development plan.
7. A minimum impact code for visitors must be developed. The code must tell what a visitor should or should not do while s/he is travelling

inside Wadi Rum.

8. Graffiti must be stopped. It is not only ugly but gives a negative impression to tourists while they are enjoying the beauties of nature.
9. Rock climbing should be regulated.
10. A quick rescue mechanism must be set up utilising helicopter or some other fast means of evacuation in case of emergencies or accidents.
11. A good communication system must be developed in different parts of Wadi Rum as some of the areas are remote.
12. A partnership between public and private sectors as well as with the local communities is a necessity if the tourism industry, not only for Wadi Rum but for all of Jordan, is to be sustained.

The writer is a native conservation, sustainable rural development and ecotourism consultant. He contributed this article to the Jordan Times.



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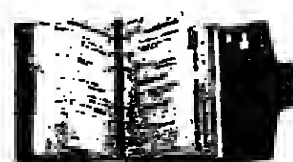
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Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Most of Jordan's external debt is owed to international financial institutions

**** LOCAL REVENUES** are estimated to amount to JD1,704,350,000 in the 1998 budget with taxes accounting for JD1,008,100,000 of the total. Income tax is estimated to earn the treasury JD191,300,000 and taxes on external trade transactions are expected to bring JD514,000,000. Revenues from taxes on local transactions were estimated at JD302,800,000.

Local revenues from sources other than taxation were envisaged at JD696,250,000. This amount is to come from licensing (JD28,600,000), fees (JD217,200,000), earnings from services rendered (JD34,050,000) and other various earnings (JD264,000,000). The remaining revenues will come from financial grants (JD187,000,000), "refundable" loan instalments (JD50,000,000) and technical assistance to finance development projects (JD8,650,000).

The 1998 budget lists the external debt as of Oct. 31, 1997 showing total Arab loans at JD336.4 million of which JD31.95 million were from the Saudi fund, JD120.27 million from the Kuwaiti fund, JD180.58 million from the Abu Dhabi fund and JD3.6 million from the Abu Dhabi fund. Of the total Arab loans, JD245.96 million were outstanding as of Oct. 31, 1997.

Loans from industrial countries totalled JD3.9 billion according to the following breakdown: Austria (JD31.4 million), Belgium (JD9.2 million), Denmark (JD5.2 million), Finland (JD1.6 million), Germany (JD325.6 million), France (JD56.4 million), Italy (JD84.7 million), Japan (JD1,291.0 million), Spain (JD74.9 million), Sweden (JD0.5 million), Switzerland (JD16.9 million), Britain (JD420.3 million), U.S. (JD109.3 million) and Canada (JD11.9 million). Of the total, JD2.65 billion were outstanding on Oct. 31, 1997.

Loans from the governments of China, Russia, Taiwan, Iran and Korea totalled JD24.9 million, nearly half of which were Iranian credits.

Commercial loans amounted to JD74.3 million and an additional JD8.6 million was shown as owed to Mitsubishi company.

Loans from international financial institutions accounted for the bulk of external debt as such credits were listed as follows:

1) The International Monetary Fund (IMF): JD274.7 million which was drawn in full.

2) World Bank: JD687.3 million of which JD528.7 million was outstanding.

3) The International Development Fund: JD22.1 million of which the outstanding amount was JD8.6 million.

4) The European Investment Bank: JD122.2 million but the amount outstanding was JD64.9 million.

5) The OPEC Fund: JD10.9 million (JD7.3 million outstanding).

6) The Islamic Development Bank in Jeddah: JD37.9 million (JD28.2 million outstanding).

7) The Arab Monetary Fund: JD46.4 million (drawn in full).

8) The Arab Development Fund: JD344.9 million (JD201.6 million outstanding).

9) European Union: JD5.4 million (fully drawn).

The last item in this category were the bonds (real estate guarantee): JD168.5 million (drawn in full).

In conclusion, the total external debt amounts to JD5.1 billion of which JD4.3 billion was outstanding on Oct. 31, 1997 (Al Dustour).

Tens of Jordanian tankers remain stranded on Syrian-Turkish border

By Ahmad Al Khatib
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Over 167 Jordanian oil tankers have been stranded on the Syrian-Turkish border for nearly three weeks after Ankara banned their entry on suspicion they were carrying illegal oil products, officials and traders said Tuesday.

While they have refused to disclose the source of the oil, the Turkish embassy indicated the fuel oil might be coming from Iraq in violation of United Nations sanctions imposed on Baghdad after it invaded Kuwait in August 1990.

Turkish authorities

recently banned all tankers carrying crude oil from entering its territories via Syrian borders in accordance with U.N. resolutions that organise the transport and export of Iraqi oil," Ahmet Suha Umar, Turkish ambassador to Jordan, was quoted as saying.

"The Turkish government took the decision on the assumption that the crude oil was coming from Iraq to Syria and entering Turkey illegally in violation of U.N. resolutions," he said. "The decision applies to all vehicles regardless of the nationality of their drivers."

However, Jordanian offi-

cialists insisted that only the Jordanian drivers were being barred from entering Turkey though they all had valid Turkish visas.

Apart from a limited oil-for-food deal agreed with the U.N., Iraqi oil sales have been barred by the embargo. But on many occasions, it has found its way — though in limited quantities — into countries neighbouring Iraq.

Several Jordanian tanker owners said the fuel oil, carried by the vehicles, was Russian and not Iraqi. A slowdown in economic activity in Jordan has forced many Jordanian truck owners to convert their vehicles into fuel

tankers and look for business opportunities in nearby states.

"These Jordanian tankers have been stuck on the Syrian-Turkish border for twenty days. They can neither enter Turkey nor go back to Amman...because of Syrian regulations," Mr. Abdul-Rahim Jammal, head of the truck owners syndicate in northern Jordan, told the Jordan Times.

"The Foreign Ministry is in touch with Turkish officials to try and solve their plight," he added.

Foreign Ministry officials were not immediately available for comment.

Charges raised for transporting Iraqi oil to Jordan

By Ahmad Al Khatib
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan has temporarily raised the charges of transporting Iraqi oil to the Kingdom to JD 10 per tonne from JD 9.5 because of heavy demand on fuel in early winter, an official at the Ministry of Energy and

Mineral Resources said Tuesday.

The decision, which took effect on Nov. 23 but was formally made public on Tuesday, will be rescinded on Dec. 31, he told the Jordan Times.

The official, who requested anonymity, said he did not expect any fuel price hikes to offset the

new transport cost.

Iraq has been supplying Jordan with 75,000 barrels per day of crude and oil products under a bilateral trade accord. The United Nations imposed economic sanctions on Iraq after it invaded Kuwait in August 1990, including a ban on oil sales.

But it allowed Jordan to continue imports of oil from Iraq under concessionary terms in repayment of old Iraqi debts. A total of 3,000 Jordanian tankers are carrying oil from Iraq under a contract signed by the energy ministry and 19 local companies earlier this year.

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	1.0000	1.7735	0.5947	1.4323	128.65	1.4209	1738.30	1.9996	5.9361
DE Mark	0.5639	1.0000	0.3350	0.8075	72.48	0.8007	979.10	1.1288	3.3463
GB Sterling	1.6814	2.9836	1.0000	2.4067	216.24	2.3891	2822.08	3.3613	9.7786
CH Franc	0.6962	1.2379	0.4147	1.0000	88.80	0.8914	1212.20	1.3955	4.1430
JP Yen	0.0078	1.3780	0.4818	1.1125	1.0000	1.1038	13.50	165.29	4.6112
CA Dollar	0.7038	1.2388	0.4197	1.0007	1.10	1.0000	1213.88	1.3983	4.1480
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0200	0.3418	1.0024	1352.45	0.8170	11.49	3.4133	11.49
NL Guilder	0.5001	88.69	0.2972	71.65	64.33	0.7105	668.89	1.0000	2.9683
FR Franc	0.1685	0.2987	0.1001	24.1162	21.65	0.2392	33.68	33.6800	1.0000

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	1.0000	1.7735	0.5947	1.4323	128.65	1.4209	1738.30	1.9996	5.9361
Jordan Dinar	1.4124	2.5272	0.5325	1.3149	108.17	1.3149	1622.54	2.0000	5.9361
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.4732	0.1589	0.38215	34.3242	0.4732	5821.5	0.8000	2.3891
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	4.698	1.589	3.8215	304.34	4.698	5821.5	8.0000	23.891
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.4905	0.1630	0.39021	35.0434	0.4905	6134.1	1.0000	2.9836
Kuwait Dinar	3.2873	5.8531	1.9503	4.71032	423.191	5.8531	7367.3	10.0000	29.836
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.4864	0.1626	0.38215	34.3242	0.4864	6134.1	1.0000	2.9836
Lebanese L1000	0.66	1.180	0.390	0.950	120.00	1.180	1476.0	2.0000	5.9361
Egyptian	0.2939	0.5201	0.1762	0.4321	54.751	0.5201	6501.0	1.0000	2.9836

Energy			Mid-East Currencies					
Oil	Last	Previous	Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
Brent	18.39	18.34	SA Riyal	0.2686	0.4732	0.19899	0.38215	34.3242
N. Texas	18.73	18.73	AE Dirham	0.2723	0.48516	0.16154	0.39021	38.0434
Bonny	18.39	18.34	KW Dinar	3.2873	5.83431	1.96503	4.71032	423.191
Dubai	17.26	17.40	BH Dirham	0.9710	4.7081	1.57778	3.80228	341.413
UL Gas	181.00	180.00	CY Pound	1.3271	3.4073	1.1417	2.7807	247.143

JOD Cross Rates			Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)						
Currency	Buy	Sell	Period	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	9 Months	1 Year	
US Dollar	0.708	0.710	USD	5.92	5.86	5.89	5.92	5.92	
GB Sterling	1.1931	1.1991	GBP	7.50	7.63	7.70	7.72	7.74	
DE Mark	0.3981	0.4001	JPY	1.12	0.05	0.15	0.19	0.30	
CH Franc	0.484	0.4986	DEM	3.68	3.72	3.83	3.92	4.01	
FR Franc	0.119	0.1196	FRF	3.43	3.57	3.72	3.84	3.96	
JP Yen	0.5507	0.5535	CHF	1.80	1.62	1.69	1.61	1.80	
NL Guilder	0.3534	0.3552	ITL	6.05	6.96	5.65	5.40	5.22	
IT Lira	0.4067	0.4087							

Source: Central Bank of Jordan

Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET											
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR TUESDAY 02/12/1997											
PART	12 MONTHS HIGH	12 MONTHS LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE
N	346.000	249.000	ARAB BANK	15.3	1.20	27	9460	3154560	332.00	333.00	1.00+
N	2.340	1.680	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	6.1	0.00	18	10253	19663	1.91	1.92	0.01+
N	3.600	1.900	BANK OF JORDAN	10.3	0.00	6	3750	7313	1.99	1.98	0.01-
N	2.680	2.150	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	10.3	6.08	10	41600	107790	2.58	2.60	0.02+
N	5.260	4.600	THE ROUSING BK.	15.7	3.68	12	38403	202028	5.26	5.26	-
S	4.180	1.850	JOR. KUWAIT BANK	10.5	0.00	3	500	1186	2.01	1.97	0.04-
S	1.050	0.740	JOR. GULF BANK	4.5	9.33	32	51300	38786	0.76	0.75	0.01-
S	4.050	2.900	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	15.5	3.15	31	17181	52298	3.04	3.05	0.01+
BANK SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 232.80 %CHG: +0.18 139 172547 3583622											
N	2.950	2.700	JORDAN INSURANCE	11.6	5.56	2	4000	10800	2.75	2.70	0.05-
N	2.020	1.590	JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	5.4	7.81	3	6100	12142	1.95	1.92	0.03-
N	2.350	1.820	ARAB LIFE INSUR.	8.0	4.84	1	600	1128	1.92	1.88	0.04-
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 115.87 %CHG: -0.98 6- 10700 24070											
N	2.050	1.550	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	9.3	5.21	3	2100	4032	1.92	1.92	-
N	4.030	1.320	JORD. ELECTRICITY	15.8	4.34	4	1000	2650	2.79	2.65	0.14-
N	3.050	2.300	SHIPPING LINES	14.0	5.42	1	400	960	2.50	2.40	0.10-
N	1.550	0.930	KATL. PORTFOLIO	0.00	0.00	9	4100	4545	1.12	1.12	-
N	1.010	0.820	REAL ESTATE DEV.	19.5	6.67	2	200	180	0.90	0.90	-
N	0.810	0.480	JORDAN INTL. TRAD.	26.2	0.00	1	500	255	0.52	0.51	0.01-
N	8.900	6.700	ALBANK	14.9	6.02	2	650	5402	8.31	8.31	-
N	1.680	1.150	KID. EAST HOTELS	19.2	0.00	2	500	6330	1.30	1.26	0.04-
N	3.900	2.890	ARAB INTL. INV. MGMT.	9.7	0.00	8	2450	9123	3.72	3.73	0.01+
N	1.100	0.900	KARKA EDUCATION	9	0.00	6	5591	5366	0.96	0.96	-
N	2.230	1.630	UNIFIED CO.	8.1	6.43	1	150	257	1.71	1.71	-
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 108.20 %CHG: -0.48 42 22241 39182											
N	4.450	3.010	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	20.9	3.55	8	1562	4837	3.10	3.10	-
N	4.140	3.050	JOR. PROSPERITY MINES	10.0	2.78	3	7100	2556	3.55	3.60	0.05+
N	7.050	5.200	ARAB POTASH CO.	15.0	3.10	3	2100	13540	6.40	6.45	0.05+
N	11.160	9.200	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	10.2	8.43	7	990	10433	10.52	10.55	0.03+
N	3.260	1.330	INDUSTRIAL COMM. AGR.	9	0.00	1	950	657	1.46	1.46	-
N	4.700	3.300	ARAB PHARM. MFG.	11.4	4.84	8	1180	4918	4.16	4.13	0.03-
N	1.670	1.020	JOR. PIPES MANFACT.	17.0	5.84	1	950	1302	1.38	1.37	0.01-
N	0.690	0.450	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	9.7	0.00	3	1500	695	0.46	0.46	-
N	1.200	0.450	INTERMED. PETROL. CHEN.	9	0.00	19	11400	4934	0.45	0.43	0.02-
N	1.880	0.890	JOR. WOODWORK INDUS.	9	0.00	1	600	6055	0.89	0.87	0.02-
N	3.000	1.800	KATL. CABLE WIRE MFG.	28.6	0.00	3	2700	4621	1.80	1.78	0.02-
N	0.890	0.530	JOR. SULPHUR-CHEN	9	0.00	9	3000	1852	0.62	0.61	0.01-
N	1.670	1.260	ARAB PHARM. CHEN.	16.0	5.60	3	750	938	1.26	1.25	0.01-
N	1.380	0.920	UNIV. HOSP. INDUS.	10.1	13.33	13	7050	5344	0.76	0.75	0.01-
N	1.070	0.810	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	16.5	0.00	6	2600	2340	0.90	0.90	-
N	2.090	1.340	EL. & CABLE MFG.	48.2	0.00	3	900	1233	1.38	1.37	0.01-
N	1.310	1.080	IND. TOBACCO	6.7	0.00	5	2122	2609	1.22	1.23	0.01+
N	1.200	0.860	UNION CH. & VEG.	48.6	0.00	1	1000	1070	1.09	1.07	0.02-
N	0.810	0.710	JORDAN STEEL	33.9	6.67	7	1860	1395	0.75	0.75	-
N	0.840	0.570	KID. EAST COMPLEX	7.6	16.13	19	16050	9893	0.61	0.62	0.01+
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 117.25 %CHG: +0.50 137 72753 104705											
GRAND TOTAL INDEX: 172.44 %CHG: +0.25 324 278061 3751578											
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR TUESDAY 02/12/1997											
N	0.640	0.410	KATL. REP. NEW. HOLM.	9	0.00	1	250	128	0.50	0.51	0.01+
N	0.610	0.370	JOR. TRADE PAC.	9.9	0.00	10	13000	4810	0.37	0.37	-
N	0.800	0.660	UNION INV. 50%	9	0.00	12	50500	11615	0.74	0.73	0.01-
N	0.570	0.360	ARAB FIN. INVEST.	9	0.00	9	16900	7088	0.40	0.42	0.02+
N	1.780	0.610	AL-DARILAH 75%	66.2	0.00	1	1400	616	1.15	1.19	0.04+
N	1.550	1.050	CERTUSCO INV. GROUP	2	0.00	1	250	408	1.55	1.63	0.08+
N	4.00	1.140	JOR. INDUS. MACH. & REFRIG.	9	0.00	3	2800	476	1.16	1.17	0.01+
N	0.690	0.440	ARAB FOOD & BEV.	9	0.00	5	5705	3477	0.54	0.51	0.03-
N	0.530	0.320	ARAB INTL. INV. TRD.	36.9	0.00	3	2000	640	0.32	0.32	-
N	0.750	0.390	KATL. MULT. ENG. & MACH.	0	0.00	36	101535	42628	0.40	0.42	0.02+
N	0.660	0.380	KIDRIST PHARM. 75%	8	0.00	8	4650	1767	0.63	0.63	-
N	0.860	0.400	UNION TOBACCO 75%	8	0.00	3	8150	8915	1.35	1.35	-
N	0.730	0.550	KATL. PHARM.	2	0.00	2	5000	3250	0.65	0.65	-
N	0.860	0.600	IND. CERAMIC	15.7	0.00	3	1500	903	0.61	0.60	0.01-
N	0.820	0.560	KATL. POLYMER	8	0.00	23	4450	2978	0.57	0.56	0.01-
N	1.000	0.660	KATL. ALUMINUM 75%	94.6	0.00	5	1300	1720	0.68	0.68	-
N	1.000	0.890	MOODER FOOD IND. 75%	2	0.00	1	250	140	0.85	0.81	0.04-
GRAND TOTAL 125 260930 112307											
I : New 12 months high + : New 12 months low N : Stock dividend during the past 12 months S : Listed during the past 12 months											

World Cup history costs England seeds' spot

MARSEILLE (AFP) — World Cup history cost England a vital seeds' spot for the 1998 World Cup when the eight seeded teams were named here on Tuesday.

Although England won their qualifying group and are placed sixth in the world in the FIFA rankings the France '98 organising committee decided performances in the past three World Cups were more important.

The seeds will be current World Cup holders Brazil, France, Germany, Italy, Argentina, Spain, Romania and Holland.

"The seeded teams were determined upon a combination of two factors —

the performance in the past three World Cups and the FIFA rankings. World Cup history counted for 60 per cent and the ranking for 40 per cent," explained FIFA general secretary Sepp Blatter.

The organising committee also decided to ensure that none of the five African countries qualified for the finals should be in the same group.

The decision could prove fatal for England.

It is now possible that England could find themselves in a group made up of Brazil, Nigeria and Croatia.

"As far as the seedings go England were penalised because they were not

in the 1994 World Cup finals," added Blatter.

The committee also decided that each of the 32 teams in the finals will get one million Swiss francs for every match they play.

It was also agreed that yellow cards collected during the qualifying rounds will not be counted for the finals.

"Players will be able to start the final competition of France '98 with a clean record," said Blatter.

But players who earned a red card will have to serve the remaining suspension at the start of the finals in June next year.

2nd Arab Handball Champions Cup kicks off today

By Roufan Nahhas
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The 2nd Arab Handball Champions Cup kicks off Wednesday with champions Al Ahli of Egypt and Jordan's Al Salt meeting in the opening match of the event held from Dec. 3-13 at the Sports Palace of Al Hussein Sports City.

Two teams will be representing Jordan in the ten-team 10-day championship held under the patronage of HRH Princess Sumayya.

Teams participating in the tournament are: Egypt's Al Ahli and Al Olympi, Qatar's Al Rayan and Qatar, Al Ahli of the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli, Kuwait's Al Qadissieh, Lebanon's Al Sadaqah and Jordan's Al Arabi and Al Salt.

Fans of the sport will have the chance to see the best of the Arab world's handball teams competing for the title.

Al Shabab of the United Arab Emirates, Palestine's Al Itihad and Algeria's Itihad Al Binaa pulled out of the event.

The Jordan Handball Federation announced that two Ukrainian players will play with Jordan's Al Arabi and Al Salt giving them a bigger chance to compete for advanced standings in the event.

The ten competing teams will play in two groups:

• Group A: Egypt's Al Ahli, Qatar's Qatar, United Arab Emirates' Al Ahli, Jordan's Al Salt and Lebanon's Al

Sadaqah.

• Group B: Jordan's Al Arabi, Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli, Egypt's Al Olympi, Qatar's Al Rayan and Kuwait's Al Qadissieh.

Schedule of matches - first round

Egypt's Al Ahli vs. Jordan's Al Salt	Dec. 3
Qatar's Qatar vs. UAE's Al Ahli	Dec. 3
Jordan's Al Arabi vs. Qatar's Al Rayan	Dec. 4
S. Arabia's Al Ahli vs. Egypt's Al Olympi	Dec. 4
Lebanon's Al Sadaqah vs. UAE's Al Ahli	Dec. 4
Kuwait's Al Qadissieh vs. Egypt's Al Olympi	Dec. 5
Jordan's Al Arabi vs. S. Arabia's Al Ahli	Dec. 5
Egypt's Al Ahli vs. Qatar's Qatar	Dec. 5
Qatar's Al Rayan vs. S. Arabia's Al Ahli	Dec. 6
Jordan's Al Salt vs. Qatar's Qatar	Dec. 6
Lebanon's Al Sadaqah vs. Egypt's Al Ahli	Dec. 6
Kuwait's Al Qadissieh vs. Jordan's Al Arabi	Dec. 7
UAE's Al Ahli vs. Egypt's Al Ahli	Dec. 7
Jordan's Al Salt vs. Lebanon's Al Sadaqah	Dec. 7
Egypt's Al Olympi vs. Jordan's Al Arabi	Dec. 8
Qatar's Al Rayan vs. Kuwait's Al Qadissieh	Dec. 8
Qatar's Qatar vs. Lebanon's Al Sadaqah	Dec. 8
UAE's Al Ahli vs. Jordan's Al Salt	Dec. 9
S. Arabia's Al Ahli vs. Kuwait's Al Qadissieh	Dec. 9
Egypt's Al Olympi vs. Qatar's Al Rayan	Dec. 9

Thousands of Iranian women break taboo, join football celebration

TEHRAN (AFP) — Thousands of young Iranian women forced their way into Tehran's huge Azadi stadium in defiance of the authorities on Tuesday to attend an official welcoming ceremony for the Iranian football team.

The women, dressed in the scarves, black robes or long coats mandatory in the Islamic Republic, surprised the stadium guards and stormed the gates after being turned away on their first attempt, witnesses said.

The official Iranian news agency IRNA estimated the number of women spectators, some of whom were carrying the Iranian flag and accompanied by children, at around 5,000. They sat in a separate section from the men.

A large police contingent was on hand to provide security for the ceremony honoring the Iranian team for their incredible comeback against Australia on Saturday and qualification for next year's World Cup finals in France.

Women have not been allowed to attend sports events with men in Iran since the Islamic revolution of 1979 and the authorities had warned on Monday that women would not be allowed to attend Tuesday's ceremony.

More than 100,000 football fans jammed the Azadi stadium to give a hero's welcome to the Iranian team, which came back from two goals down late in the match to eliminate Australia on away goals.

Police prevented the crowd from taking newspapers or magazines inside the stadium, apparently to avoid possible victory fires, and the authorities urged the population to stay home and watch the event live on television.

The players were flown directly to the stadium by helicopter after their arrival from Dubai. Spectators on the field where the helicopter landed swarmed and kissed the players and their Brazilian head coach Valdeir "Badu" Vieira.

The team was to give a press conference later.

Millions of Iranians poured on to the streets of every major city Saturday after the final whistle in scenes of jubilation that were virtually unprecedented here.

The country's leaders broadcast messages of congratulations and radio and television abandoned normal programming for special features on the game and the street celebrations across the country afterwards.

The national team's success even took precedence over the keenly-awaited first budget of President Mohammad Khatami which was presented to parliament Sunday.

When the session opened, the speaker and several MPs rose to pay tribute to the national team and made speeches underlining the need to invest in and give more importance to sport in general and football in particular.

Iran were 2-0 down until the 76th minute of the second leg in Melbourne against Australia. But two goals in the space of three minutes saw Iran go through to France 98.



Barcelona's Brazilian star Rivaldo (R) battles for the ball with Merida striker Gonzalo de los Santos, during the Spanish first division soccer match in Barcelona's Nou Camp stadium. Barca won 3-1 (Reuters photo)

Jazz beat Nets

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Karl Malone scored 19 points and grabbed 14 rebounds as the Utah Jazz fought off the New Jersey Nets 100-95 Monday night for their fifth straight win.

The Jazz held New Jersey to just three field goals in the fourth quarter and made several clutch free throws down the stretch to preserve their seventh straight win over the Nets.

Utah made a 14-5 run to start the second half, but New Jersey made a 10-2 run of its own. David Benoit's 3-

pointer with 0:08 left in the third period gave the nets a 76-75 lead heading to the fourth.

New Jersey got a big game from Benoit, who played his first game in the Delta Center since leaving the Jazz in 1996.



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(16/97)
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7th Circle
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Brazilian coach poised to sign for Saudis

MARSEILLE (AFP) — Carlos Alberto Parreira, who took Brazil to World Cup success in 1994, is poised to sign as coach for Saudi Arabia.

The 55-year-old Brazilian, presently coaching American club side New York-New Jersey MetroStars, is expected to earn an estimated half million dollars.

"They are still discussing the final points of the contract, but it should be sealed in the next few weeks," said an Asian football official.

Last month, the Saudis sacked their Portuguese coach Eduardo Vinga after his side's narrow 1-0 victory over Qatar in a World Cup qualifier.

He was replaced by German Otto Pfeister, who guided the Saudis to the World Cup finals in France next year.

But Pfeister, who is in charge of the Saudi Olympic team, was seen as only a stop gap until the right man could be found.

It will be Parreira's second spell as Saudi coach. In the 1980s he took them to the Asian championship before quitting and landing the job as Brazilian coach for the 1994 World Cup in the United States.

Parreira is in Marseille to coach the Rest of the World team in their match against Europe before the World Cup draw here on Thursday.

JORDAN TIMES
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Tel: 701801-7 extension 319 or
Fax: 686291 Amman - Jordan

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المصير... أول فيلم عربي بالصوت المجسم دولي ستيريو... الفيلم لم يسجل فيديو
ويعرض فيلم المصير في سينما بلازا / مجمع بنك الاسكان / ت ٢٨٢٣٨٩
بعد تركيب أحدث الاجهزة لنظام الدوبي وعلى ديسكات الليزر

Iraq accuses U.S. of impeding U.N. 'oil-for-food' agreement

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq on Tuesday accused Washington of inserting "wicked paragraphs" into its so-called oil-for-food deal with the United Nations and said the U.N. Security Council did nothing to prevent this.

"When three resolutions were issued to allow Iraq to export limited quantities of oil, America inserted wicked paragraphs infringing upon Iraq's sovereignty and unity, which is completely rejected by Iraq," the government newspaper Al Jumhuriya said.

"The [U.N. Security Council] permanent member states have not tried to prevent such paragraphs and they have not eased the implementation of the memorandum of understanding," it added.

Iraq has said that thousands of children are dying every month because of the U.N.'s stringent sanctions imposed for Baghdad's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990.

But in Brussels on Monday, U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen said Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, not the U.S. or U.N., would bear the responsibility for any deaths of Iraqi children.

Under the oil-for-food deal which went into effect last December, Iraq can sell \$2 billion worth of oil over six months to buy food and medicine.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan on Monday recommended increasing the amount Iraq can sell but proposed no specific figure.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Saeed Sabah said Baghdad would refuse to renew the deal if it was not revised.

The second phase of the deal expires on Friday, Baghdad has said that only five per cent of its purchases of food and medicine have reached Iraq.

The Security Council must

Iraq to punish importers of British beef; mocks reports on smuggled baby food

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraqi authorities have found cans of British beef infected with the "mad cow" disease and vowed to punish the importers, a magazine reported on Tuesday.

Mohammad Abdeljabbar, director of Iraq's sanitary control department, told Al Itihad, the magazine of the union of Iraqi industries, that the cans would be destroyed.

He did not specify the size of the consignment, which had been labelled as beef from Ireland and Jordan. But a laboratory analysis found the beef to be of British origin.

The importers would be punished for breaking a ban on the import of British beef, said Mr. Abdeljabbar.

A scare over the brain-wasting disease — bovine spongiform encephalopathy — spread world-wide last year after Britain announced that it could be passed on to humans.

Meanwhile, Iraq has mocked a U.S. news report on alleged smuggling of powdered baby milk to Baghdad, saying Washington feared the formula could be used for making weapons of mass destruction.

"It's unbelievable how a country which calls

itself a superpower could fear trafficking in baby milk formula to Iraq," said an Iraqi spokesman, quoted by the official news agency INA late Monday.

"Has the U.S. administration added baby milk to the list of prohibited materials which can be used to manufacture weapons of mass destruction?" asked the spokesman.

Or was it that "the United States fears Iraqi children will grow up with hatred in their hearts toward them?"

The U.S. magazine Newsweek reported that U.S. customs officials had uncovered what they believed was a ring of baby food smugglers who stole powdered milk from supermarkets to sell it at several times the price in sanctions-hit Iraq.

Thousands of cans of formula were stolen from retail stores in northern Texas over the past two years, in what customs officials told Newsweek was a scheme to sell them in Iraq.

In the 1991 Gulf war over Kuwait, the U.S. attacked an Iraqi baby milk factory which Washington said was being used as a military facility.

work to ease sanctions.

A prime condition for this is certification by UNSCOM and the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency that Iraq no longer possesses prohibited weapons and cannot rebuild those that have been destroyed.

Mr. Butler is expected to discuss with Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz and other officials issues including access to sites Iraq has declared off-limits, such as so-called "presidential palaces," bases of the special presidential guard and intelligence facilities.

Iraq says it has complied with U.N. resolutions concerning its armaments and that sanctions should be lifted.

approve any change in the plan. U.S. officials and other diplomats said the \$2 billion amount would stand, partly because there was no time to approve a change before Friday.

Iraqi newspapers on Tuesday published a statement by the trade ministry urging Iraqis to collect their food ration coupons for 1998.

Iraq is distributing food rations to its citizens under the deal every month at give-away prices.

Meanwhile, a U.N. official said in New York on Monday that U.N. weapons inspection chief, Richard Butler, planned to arrive in Baghdad on Sunday on his first visit since a crisis erupted in late October between Iraq and U.N. arms inspectors.

Mr. Butler, who heads the

U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) in charge of scrapping Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, has asked the Iraqi government to agree to his visit, accompanied by about seven colleagues, UNSCOM political adviser Gustavo Ziaurinen told Reuters.

Mr. Butler had intended flying to Baghdad in early November on a regular two-monthly visit. But the trip was called off after Iraq on Oct. 29 ordered the expulsion of American members of U.N. weapons inspection teams.

UNSCOM then withdrew nearly all its staff, resulting in a three-week stand-off until Russia persuaded Baghdad to relent and U.N. experts went back to Iraq on Nov. 21.

Russia in turn promised to

30 per cent of Israeli high school students admit being racists

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Thirty per cent of Israeli high school students consider themselves racist and more than 70 per cent want to reinvent Arab Israelis' right to be represented in parliament, according to a poll published Tuesday.

The survey, conducted by Jerusalem's Hebrew University and an educational institute affiliated with the Israeli kibbutz movement, found that the number of students who defined themselves as racist reached 45 per cent among recent immigrants.

The researchers who carried out the survey said this appeared to reflect the anti-Semitism suffered by the recent immigrants in their home countries and their desire to identify a "common enemy" as they seek to fit into Israeli society.

Concerning Israel's 850,000 Arab citizens, just 50.1 per cent of the Jewish high school students questioned agreed with the principle that "Arabs are citizens who have equal rights in the state."

But when asked if Arabs should continue to be represented in the Knesset, Israel's parliament, 72 per cent said no on the grounds that their presence could endanger the security of the state and its Jewish character.

The survey was carried out among 1,488 students in 25 high schools around Israel. Its results were published in the Yediot Aharonot newspaper.



EARTH MADE OF SILK: Employees of dyed-goods manufacturing and wholesaling company 'Yoshioka Jin Shoten' try to lift an earth made of tie-dyed silk in Kyoto Tuesday. It took forty craftsmen about four months to dye the earth, coral, rainbow, airship and melting glacier using Kyoto's traditional dyeing techniques. It will be shown at a two-day exhibition related to the U.N.-sponsored international environment convention aimed at fixing legally-binding cuts in greenhouse gas emissions (AFP photo)

Israel tries to sell new peace initiative to doubting U.S. Rubin warns 'if offer not sincere,' Netanyahu responsible for deadlock

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel dispatched a senior envoy Tuesday to try to persuade a sceptical U.S. administration that its offer of a conditional transfer of more West Bank land to the Palestinians was a serious bid to revive the peace process.

Uzi Arad, the diplomatic advisor to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, was scheduled to explain the Israeli initiative to members of President Bill Clinton's National Security Council officials.

Monday, Mr. Arad carried out a similar mission to Cairo with Mr. Netanyahu's cabinet secretary Danny Naveh. Egyptian officials, like their U.S. counterparts, have reacted cautiously to the Israeli cabinet decision Sunday approving the principle of a limited further troop withdrawal from the West Bank on condition the Palestinians meet a series of Israeli demands.

Israel is hoping that Egypt and the U.S. can convince the Palestinians to accept the deal even though it falls short of meeting the requirements of the Oslo interim peace accords co-signed by both Cairo and Washington.

Under the interim arrangements, Israel should carry out three troop withdrawals by mid-1998 from the West Bank, 70 per cent of which remains under full Israeli control.

Mr. Netanyahu is offering instead a one-time pullback, but he has yet to specify the scope or timing for the move.

In return, Israel insists the Palestinians crush Islamists responsible for attacks which have killed scores of Israelis and hand over persons wanted in connection with those attacks.

The deal would also require the Palestinian National Authority to forego further interim troop withdrawals and enter directly into negotiations on a final peace agreement that would set out the border and status of the Palestinian entity.

Mr. Netanyahu, who is widely held responsible for the months-long deadlock in the peace process, hopes to convince the international community that his plan represents a significant conces-

sion and that it is now up to the Palestinians to take a step.

The Israeli premier called President Yasser Arafat Monday night and urged him not to miss "this opportunity to advance the peace process."

Mr. Arafat's aides denounced the Israeli offer as a smokescreen designed to hide Israel's refusal to honour signed agreements. But they have refrained from formally rejecting the initiative pending Washington's response to the plan.

The U.S., for its part, took a very cautious stance while awaiting Mr. Arad and details of the Israeli proposal.

But a State Department spokesman pointedly reiterated Monday that the United States wanted a "significant and credible" troop withdrawal from the West Bank — a formula Israeli press reports said would not apply to the limited pullback being considered by Mr. Netanyahu.

"This announcement is a step in the right direction but now we are going to have to look at the substance and see how far it goes," said spokesman James Rubin.

Israeli officials have said Mr. Netanyahu's withdrawal offer would leave the Palestinians controlling around a third of the West Bank, a far cry from the 90 per cent of territory the Palestinians claim under current accords.

Monday and Tuesday alone officials reported that more than 1,000 new homes would soon be under construction in three settlements — including, for the first time in live years, a Jewish community in the Gaza Strip.

Israelis wary about Netanyahu troop withdrawal plan — poll

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israelis are worried and confused by their right-wing government's plans for a further limited withdrawal from the West Bank, according to a poll in public television Monday.

Asked: "Are you in favour of a retreat from the West Bank as proposed by Mr. Netanyahu?" a total of 33 per cent said they were in favour of the plan.

A further 22 per cent declared themselves against the idea, 17 per cent said they did not understand the proposal and 24 per cent had no opinion. The remainder refused to answer the question.

The television commentator said the 41 per cent who were undecided was an exceptional figure, saying the undecided in most polls added up to between 10 and 15 per cent.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's cabinet agreed Sunday to accept the principle of handing over another parcel of West Bank land to the Palestinian National Authority, but it formed a ministerial committee to decide the scope of the redeployment and attached a series of conditions for the Palestinians.

The poll questioned a representative sample of 500 Israelis, and had a margin of error of four per cent.



Gorby pizza to go, with dash of perestroika

MOSCOW (AFP) — After glasnost and perestroika, former Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev is to offer the world pizza, courtesy of the U.S. restaurant chain Pizza Hut. The 66-year-old statesman has agreed to take part in a Pizza Hut television commercial in order to raise funds for his eponymous charitable foundation, the Interfax news agency said Tuesday. Details of the script remain sketchy, but according to the scenario cited by Interfax, Gorbachev will offer a slice of pizza to a group of hungry diners, who exclaim: "Long Live Gorbachev who brought us Pizza Hut."

Enraged cyclist bites bus driver in the testicles

WARSAW (AFP) — An enraged cyclist, cut up once too often by a bus driver in the Polish city of Krakow, took his revenge by breaking the driver's nose and biting him in the testicles and stomach, the PAP agency reported. After a manhunt, the Polish police identified 30-year-old Slawomir A. as the cyclist who justified his conduct by saying that the driver had violated the driving code by overtaking him and had tried to stop him from getting on the bus by slamming the door in his face. The doctory attacker was dubbed the "enraged cyclist" by the local press.

Census curfew allows fugitives to be arrested

ANKARA (R) — A one-day curfew for a national census in Turkey helped police to find hundreds of fugitives who had stayed at home to be registered, officials said. A spokesman for Ankara security headquarters told Reuters that police took advantage of the dawn-to-dusk ban on leaving home to detain suspects who had previously eluded them. "We knew where they lived but hadn't been able to arrest them. We just went to the addresses and took them in," the spokesman said. The country ground to a halt while 600,000 officials went from door to door to count the population.

New Diana tribute album released in time for Christmas

LONDON (AFP) — A new compact disc music tribute to Diana, Princess of Wales, was released in Britain Monday in time for the Christmas season and is expected to top the charts. The album "Diana, Princess of Wales — Tribute" considered a real tearjerker, is a compilation which includes REM's recording of "Everybody Hurts", Queen's "Who Wants to Live Forever" and Michael Jackson's "Gone Too Soon." It is expected to sell more than 500,000 copies.

Lone 18th century Stradivarius found on train

WARSAW (AFP) — A routine check on a Berlin-bound Polish train turned up a rare treasure this week — an 18th century Stradivarius stuffed in a black plastic bag. Szymon Wiczorek, commander of the border police unit manning the Subiet post on the frontier between Poland and Germany, said the package was found Monday night hidden in the roof of a wagon. The instrument was engraved "1713 — Antonio Stradivari", he said. The violin has been sent to the Western town of Poznan "where experts will examine whether it is an authentic Stradivarius" made by the famed Italian violin maker, he said.

U.N. sending delegation to Libya to discuss sanctions

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan is sending a delegation to Tripoli for talks with Libyan authorities on the effects of five-year old sanctions, a U.N. spokesman said Monday.

Spokesman Fred Eckhardt told AFP that the three-man team, led by Vladimir Petrovsky of Russia would "discuss with the Libyan authorities the effects of sanctions on their country."

Mr. Annan on Monday met with Libyan ambassador Abuzed Dorda, who confirmed Tripoli's readiness to receive the U.N. delegation, Mr. Eckhardt said.

The three are expected to travel to Tripoli in mid-December on the trip which

will last one week, he added. Libyan Health Minister Suleiman Al Ghamari, who led a Libyan delegation to the U.N. General Assembly session in September, on Sept. 16 officially asked Mr. Annan to send a team to Libya to study the sanctions' impact.

Libya has been under an air and arms embargo since 1992 for failing to hand over two Libyans wanted in connection with the bombing of a Pan Am jetliner over Lockerbie, Scotland, which killed 270 people.

Tripoli has offered instead to have the two suspects tried in a neutral country or in the International Court of Justice at The Hague, a proposal backed by the Arab League and the Organisation of

African Unity. But London and Washington have rejected the offer.

The 15-member U.N. Security Council, which is increasingly divided over the Libyan sanctions issue, decided to keep the sanctions in place at a regular four-monthly review on Nov. 7.

In a bid to defuse the situation, Britain has invited observers from the United Nations, Organisation of African Unity and Arab League to monitor the impartiality of the Scottish judicial system.

Mr. Annan is expected to name the U.N. observers in the coming days.

Sudan suspends U.N. 'un-Islamic' family planning programme

KHARTOUM (AFP) — The Sudanese parliament has suspended a United Nations-sponsored family-planning programme for Sudan on the grounds that it contradicts Islamic values.

The national assembly resolution was passed Monday following days of heated debate sparked by a report from the parliamentary social affairs committee on activities by international and local associations in the Khartoum suburb of Al Haj Youssuf under a programme sponsored by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFP).

The committee, which

branded the programme a threat to the Sudanese family, has called for legal action against all government agencies and officials involved in approving the Al Haj Youssuf and similar programmes in Sudan, and for the disbanding of all associations involved, including Sudanese family planning and fertility control offices.

The committee also called for legislation to "protect the Sudanese family from such practices."

The health minister, Ihsan Ghebbawi, said during the debate that contraceptives were distributed to families

without her ministry's knowledge, though she said her ministry "relies heavily" on aid by international agencies.

This was due to the small government financial appropriation for health services, which she said "did not exceed 1 per cent of the country's gross national product."

"Except for Somalia and Djibouti, the health situation in the Sudan is the worst in the region," Ms. Ghebbawi said. The offending programme is said to have involved distribution of birth control pills, condoms and other contraceptive devices among Sudanese families.

But a leading speaker in the parliamentary debate, Khedijah Karar, said that UNFP programmes included a project in the River Nile state in northern Sudan "for total sterilisation of 5,000 schoolgirls of 15 years and above."

In addition to suspending the programmes, the parliamentary resolution demanded the calling to account of "all voluntary organisations and agencies involved in the legal, ethical and health abuses committed under those programmes."

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Dignity Christia

ANABUS (AFP) — His Royal
Highness Crown Prince Has
Wednesday opened a
conference in inter-
dialogue stressing that
the right of human beings to
to full and equal
in social, economic or
standing — is one
on which Islam and
Christianity are in total agree-

"The basis for the concept
human dignity is the same
for all religions and which, in
today, enjoys the living
of people for the full
of one another, and of
unity at large," said the
Crown Prince in his address
the meeting organised by
the Royal Academy for
Cultural Research
of the Foundation in
Amman with the Pontifi-
cal and Inter-religious
Dialogue Commission.
He did not assemble to
talk at each other, we
wonder in the spirit of com-
munity to speak to each other
to identify what aspects of
culture are relevant to each
culture retaining our particu-
lar identity," the Prince
said.

Prince Hassan called on the
delegates to the meeting "to
exchange in looking
at each other's text,
culture and history, to devel-
op a framework for disagree-
ment. We claim to be living
the end of this millennium
the beginning of the new
millennium, let us develop a
cultural framework for dis-
agreement to accept responsi-
bility for works and for
peace at all levels and to
promote the political and
cultural dimensions of
dialogue.
With reference to Islamic
culture and the need for Islamic
cooperation in pro-
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year

Arab Bank branches in Palestine

Ramallah/Al-Manara

Ramallah/Al-Balad

Beit Jibril

Hebron

Nablus

Jericho

Tulkarem

Qalqilya

Jerusalem

Gaza

Gaza City/Al-Birah

Nisan Younis

ARAB BANK